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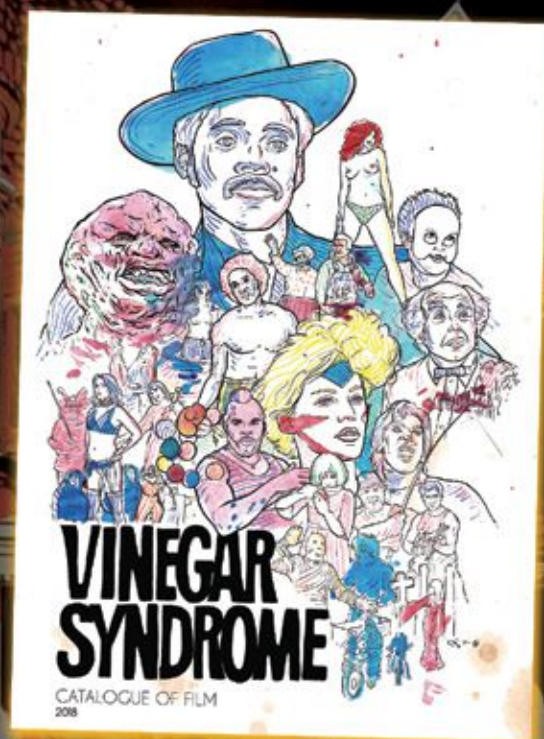
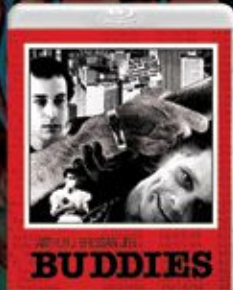
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**CHRISTOPHER LEE**

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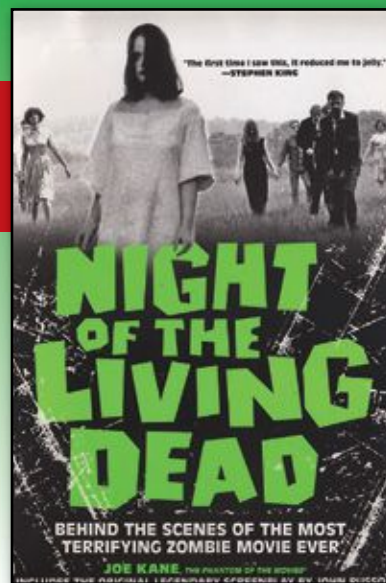
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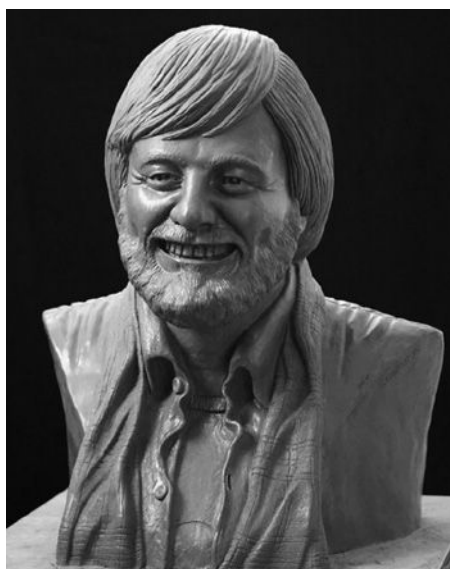
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# The Phantom Speaks!

**DRIVE-IN DAZE:** One glance outside your Phantom's video room window tells us that summer's here and the time is right not only for dancing in the street but truckin' on down to your local drive-in to catch a triple feature or two. Or, failing that—due to a likely lack of ozoners in your area—drawing the blinds, pulling the shades, flipping on the AC and settling on the couch for a movie marathon. Thanks to a busy Blu-ray and DVD season, you'll find plenty of fresh offerings in these pages, from new releases, vintage noirs and art-house hits to drive-in faves and obscurities galore, many available in restored deluxe editions. On the up-close and personal front, we also check in with several cinematic notables. Our dynamic dad/daughter duo, Terry & Tiffany DuFoe, enjoy an intimate chinwag with exotic screen beauty Martine Beswick, who discusses her days as a Bond Girl (**Thunderball**, **From Russia with Love**), Hammer Queen (**Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde**) and everything beyond and in between. Scott Voisin catches up with one of your more distinctive character kings, once and future nerd Eddie Deezen, who recounts his adventures working with everyone from Steven Spielberg (1941) to Fred Olen Ray (**Beverly Hills Vamp**). Journalist Chris Hallock talks with one of film's busiest and most eclectic composers, Jeff Grace, whose scores have driven films spanning all genres, from horror (**Stake Land**, **Hellbenders**) to westerns (**Meek's Cutoff**, **In a Valley of Violence**) to thrillers (**A Cold Day in July**) and neo-noirs (TV's **Hap and Leonard**). And what summer issue could be deemed complete without a nod to that warm-weather perennial **Jaws**? Don Vaughan tracks down real-life shark expert George Burgess for his assessment of Hollywood's killer fish contingent, from Spielberg's famous fiend to newcomers like **The Shallows** and **Sharknado**. And, as always, our dedicated crew of opinionated columnists and crix contribute their latest filmic findings.

**OBIT ORBIT:** In grimmer developments, the thespian ranks were particularly hard hit by the Reaper's furiously swinging scythe since last we convened, claiming, among way too many others, Susan (**Five Easy Pieces**) Anspach, 75, longtime Claude Chabrol suspense star Stephane (**Just Before Nightfall**, **Le Boucher**) Audran, 85, diminutive but charismatic Debbie Lee (**Total Recall**) Carrington, 58, hip screen menace Frank (**Assault on Precinct 13**, **Escape from New York**) Doubleday, 73, Pamela (**Cherry 2000**) Gidley, 52, Jim Hendricks (better known to cult TV fans as Commander USA), 69, big-screen Lois Lane Margot (**Sisters**) Kidder, 69, be-



Romero or Bust at the Monroeville Mall.

loved NYC area kid-show host, versatile comic and **The Projectionist** protag Chuck McCann, 83, **Wizard of Oz** actor Jerry Maren, 98, actress/singer Patricia Morison, 103, character actor Tom (**Shadows**) Reese, 88, Tom (Billy Jack) Laughlin's screen and life partner Delores Taylor, 85, Korean actor Soon-Tek Oh, 85, Dr. Evil's diminutive doppelganger Verne Troyer, 49, and gentle giant Clint (**Cheyenne**) Walker, 90. Closer to home, we lost two fave **VideoScope** interviewees, military tough guy extraordinaire R. Lee (**Full Metal Jacket**) Erney, 74, and actor of all trades William (**Five**) Phipps, 96, whose screen credits stretched from 1947 to 2000. Also departing were renowned authors Philip (**Goodbye, Columbus**) Roth, 85, and Tom (**The Bonfire of the Vanities**) Wolfe, 88, directors Michael (**Logan's Run**) Anderson, 98, and Milos (**One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest**) Forman, 86, along with longtime **Mad** magazine editor Nick Meglin, 82, The Ventures guitar great Nokie Edwards, 82, and New York Mets on- and off-field fixture Rusty (La Grande Orange) Staub, 73. Fortunately for us, their contributions live on and can be readily accessed for continued enjoyment.

**PHLATSCREEN PHLASHES:** Among the recently released films we caught during our run-up to press time were several new titles from the busy archivists at Kino Lorber Films, including Nathan Juran's surprisingly fun (considering Ray Harryhausen's conspicuous absence) FX-driven fantasy **Jack the Giant Killer** (1962), the long-elusive supernatural thriller **The Reincarnation of Peter Proud** (1975), Andy Sidaris' early (1979) caper



**Seven**, and actor/director Paul Henreid's misleadingly titled **A Woman's Devotion**, an intense 1956 PTS psycho killer tale starring Janice Rule and Ralph Meeker that was better served by its original handle **Battle Shock**. We also enjoyed a pair of vintage crime capers wherein Brits brazenly imitate their American models, **No Orchids for Miss Blandish** (Kino) and **13 East Street** (via the 'net), plus the noir classics **Key Largo** and **Gun Crazy**, both on Blu-ray via Warner Archive. In the comedy arena, we recommend a pair of W.C. Fields silents, **Running Wild** and **It's the Old Army Game** (both via Kino), along with Norman Lear's 1971 satire **Cold Turkey** (Olive Films), featuring the two and only Bob and Ray in multiple roles, and Basil Dearden's 1957 ode to the joy of movie-going, **The Smallest Show on Earth**, with Peter Sellers as an eccentric projectionist.

**FOUND FOOTAGE:** And speaking of the joy of movie-going, be sure to scope out our new tome, **Found Footage: How the Astro-Zombies Saved My Life and Other Tales of Movie Madness** (CultMachine). Order your personally autographed copy today (see page 57 for details).

**MONDO ROMERO:** Late, great genre filmmaker and **Living Dead** creator George Romero received his overdue due when a bust of the legendary auteur, crafted by sculptor Chris Stavrakis, was installed at Pennsylvania's Monroeville Mall, iconic site of Romero's **Night of the Living Dead** follow-up **Dawn of the Dead**. The statue was unveiled in time for the annual Living Dead Weekend's **Dawn of the Dead** 40th Anniversary celebration, an event attended by many of the towering terror film's alumni, from actor/makeup ace Tom Savini to costar Ken Foree.

**DEPT. OF CORRECTIONS:** The correct spelling of our 2018 Phantom "B"wards Best Actress winner is Persephone Apostolou (**7 Witches**).

**IN YOUR FACEBOOK:** We hope you'll visit **VideoScope** on our Facebook page and take a detour to **The Monster Times**, a newly launched FB page devoted to that venerable genre zine (where yours truly worked as editor for most of its fun run). And be sure to look in on longtime **Paper** magazine film critic Dennis Dermody's **Cinemaniac** page and scope out his excellent ode to the 42nd Street movie playland of old, **The Death of the Deuce**. In the meantime, till next time, don't forget to...

*Keep watching the screens!*

**VideoScope 5**





# Phantom Pheedback



## CASTLE KEEPER

Dear Phantom,  
Thanks to the Phantom for reviewing **The Night Walker** in *VideoScope* #106, although I would have given it a full three Ro-Man rating at a minimum. For me its assets include the narrated (by Paul Frees) prologue about the nature of nightmares, which I found pretty scary when I first saw the picture as a youngster. And the wedding chapel sequence with its creepy cast of mannequins and ominous organ music culminating in a spinning chandelier of candles is also quite effective, and probably the highlight of the movie. On the down side **The Night Walker** is, as the Phantom notes, tedious at times. It plays like a Gothic soap opera in between some of the better scenes (but then what's wrong with a good Gothic soap? Just ask millions of **Dark Shadows** fans).

Overall I wouldn't rate **The Night Walker** as bottom of the barrel William Castle fodder—I'd save duds like **13 Frightened Girls** and **The Old Dark House** ('63) for that distinct dishonor. A lot of people would put **Zotz!** in the basement as well, but for me it's a fun Tom Poston vehicle with an unusually straight-laced Jim Backus along for the wacky ride. Of course, **The Night Walker** is not top-notch Castle either. Classics like **House on Haunted Hill**, **The Tinger** and **Mr. Sardonicus** stand among the gimmick-meister's finest directorial achievements, while **The Night Walker** falls somewhere in the middle of the Castle tower, which suits me just fine. I have a fondness for Robert Bloch scripts, including another collaboration with Castle, **Strait-Jacket**, which, like **The Night Walker**, showcases a waning movie queen from the golden age of Hollywood. In fact, after **Strait-Jacket** Joan Crawford was offered the role of Irene Trent in **The Night Walker** but turned it down.

It was grand dames like Joan Crawford and Bette Davis who paved the way for aging female stars to explore the realm of psychological horror and screen suspense with **Baby Jane**, **Sweet Charlotte**, etc., although it was probably Gloria Swanson who started the ball rolling, right down **Sunset Boulevard**. With **The Night Walker** Barbara Stanwyck, working with her real-life ex-husband Robert Taylor, no less, did her bit in the psychological thriller genre, then moved on to bigger television stardom than silver screen legends Crawford or Davis ever found (although the recent FX miniseries **Feud**, basically a speculative biopic about the Crawford-Davis rivalry, made a big splash on the small screen. I thought it was excellent, especially Jessica Lange as Crawford).

6 *VideoScope*



Barbara's bad dreams: Back by popular demand.

Speaking of Miss Stanwyck, she should win a special Scream Queen Award for her performance as Irene Trent, as she really goes over the top with the ear-piercing shrieks ("I can't wake up!!!"). **The Night Walker** was her final theatrical picture before her four-year foray into TV's **The Big Valley**, although I recall her doing some serious screaming in a few episodes there as well.

The eerie Vic Mizzy score greatly enhances the atmosphere of **The Night Walker**. Mizzy is known for writing the theme songs for television's **The Addams Family** and **Green Acres**, as well as scoring **The Ghost and Mr. Chicken** and other Universal Don Knotts features. For me the haunting, deliberate strains of Mizzy's **Night Walker** "theme" nearly rivals the iconic four-note **Twilight Zone** theme in its brilliant simplicity. As an aside, **The Night Walker** is notable for having one of the most lurid posters of its day, as seen on page 46 of *VS* #106. It's one of many movie posters created, without credit or acknowledgment, by prolific artist Reynold Brown. Pleasant Dreams.  
—Timothy Walters, Muskogee, OK

Agree with your picks for the film's highlights—always enjoyed that wild nightmare prologue narrated by the inimitable Mr. Frees. Two top-tier Castle films, **The Tinger** and **Strait-Jacket**, are available in new Blu-ray editions via *Scream Factory*. **Sunset Boulevard**, meantime, shares screen time with **Shattered Glass** in this issue's scribe-centric *Split Screen* (page 18).

## PLAY IT AGAIN, SAM

Dear *VideoScope*,  
I enjoyed the interview with Samantha Eggar in your recent issue [*VS* #106]. Having worked as a cinematographer with many fine actors in the motion picture and television industry, I had the immense pleasure of filming Miss Eggar in the series **The Nine Lives of Chloe King** where she had the deliciously juicy role of a sweet grandmother who is revealed to be the evil mastermind. Being of the classic era of film acting, Samantha noticed that I was always standing next to the camera when filming took place and not staring at monitors at "video village." When the assistant director went to her and said he could ask me to step away from the camera if my presence there was a distraction to her, Samantha replied "If you move, Michael, I will kill you!" She recognized and appreciated that I was close by, watching the lighting on her face. She is a professional of the highest order, and I treasure the time we had together on set. Thank you for producing such a consistently engaging and thoughtful magazine honoring our profession.  
—Michael Goi, ASC, Los Angeles, CA

And thanks, MG, for sharing that on-set insight.

Dear Phantom,  
This phan is still waiting for further adventures of the Phantom as a yout' in the city. Please?  
—Myke Andrew, Port Richey, FL

While we prep previously untold adventures, you can find all *The Phantom's* currently collected movie memoirs between the covers of a single volume. **FOUND FOOTAGE: How the Astro-Zombies Saved My Life and Other Tales of Movie Madness** (*CultMachine*) is available now via *amazon.com*, or in a personally autographed edition (see page 57 for details).

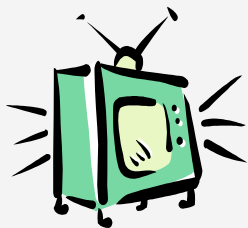
Dear *VideoScope*,  
Great magazine. I always read it cover to cover. I like the interviews with people you may not know and those you do—they're interesting!  
—Andrew Cox, Vincennes, IN

Thanks, AC, we continue that tradition in this issue as our roving reporters catch up with *Bond Girl*/Hammer Queen Martine Beswick, genre composer Jeff Grace, shark expert George Burgess, and *Once and Future Nerd* Eddie Deezen.  
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# The Phantom of the Movies'

## NEW RELEASE SHELF

*New release titles are followed by year, Phantom rating, director, lead actors, running time (with titles released in separate editions, the running time refers to the Unrated version), DVD and/or Blu-ray label and release date (month and year).*

### RATINGS KEY

⌘⌘⌘⌘  
Couldn't be better

⌘⌘⌘1/2  
Excellent

⌘⌘⌘  
Good

⌘⌘1/2  
Not bad; worth watching

⌘⌘  
Mediocre, worthwhile for a particular thesp, director or genre

⌘1/2  
Poor but may have points of interest

⌘  
Just plain bad

1/2⌘  
Even worse than that

0⌘  
The pits  
N/A

Not available on video  
N.I.D.

Not in distribution

Special thanks go to Guidance Ro-Man for his ratings symbol suggestion.



### ARE WE NOT CATS? (2016)⌘⌘⌘

D: Xander Robin. Michael Patrick Nicholson, Chelsea Lopez, Michael Godere, Adeline Thierry, Ernst Zorin, Marika Daciuk. 77 mins. (MVD Visual) 4/18

Relations between Jewish men and Gentile women have inspired American filmmakers, who have introduced their viewers to such interfaith couples in *Abie's Irish Rose*, *Portnoy's Complaint* and other films. Director Robin, a Florida State University graduate, puts his millennial spin on this subject. This means that his Jewish protagonist is a maginal Everyman, not a Woody Allen nebbish. Eli (Nicholson) is an NYC sanitation worker who loses girlfriend, job and home on the same day. He moves upstate, where he finds work hauling a modified piano to the outre club Soul Fountain, where he meets the more unconventional Anya (Lopez). Background is

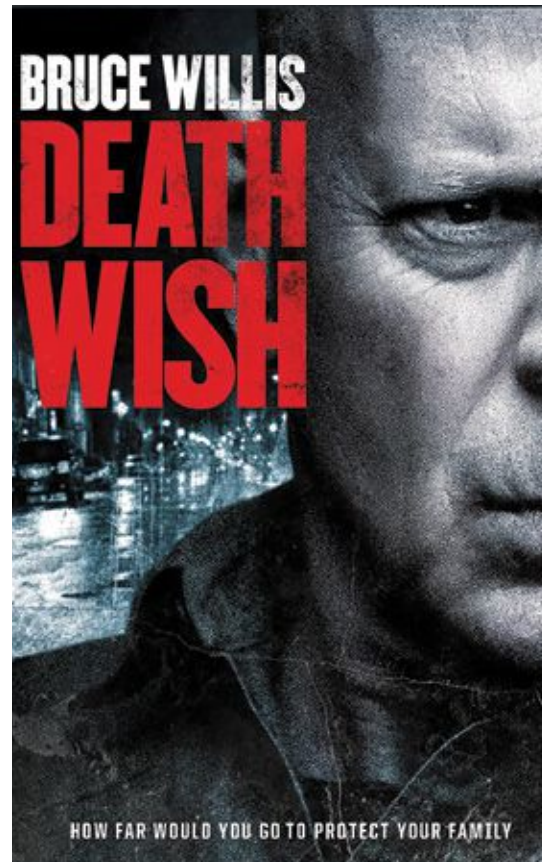
unimportant to this postmodern pair; Eli's religion is only acknowledged when he informs her that "Jews don't camp." His Russian-born parents (Zorin, Daciuk) announce that they are moving to Arizona, not Miami Beach. The couple's real bond is a shared fetish. It may be a spoiler to reveal it here, even though MVD Visual has no such qualms about doing so. This bold decision may discourage consumers from spending their money on such a film, even one directed by a DIY newcomer who applies heart to his craft. This means that they will miss Nicholson's and Lopez's natural performances and the wonderfully loopy appearance of Soviet cinema veteran Zorin. **Are We Not Cats?** is for viewers who seek out the unusual but have no time for film festivals.

—Ronald Charles Epstein

### DEATH WISH (2018)⌘⌘⌘

D: Eli Roth. Bruce Willis, Vincent D'Onofrio, Elisabeth Shue, Camilla Morrone, Dean Norris, Beau Knapp, Kimberly Elise, Len Cariou. 107 mins. (20th Century Fox Home Entertainment) 6/18

While it lacks the pure shock value of Michael Winner's brutal 1974 fable about an NYC architect, Paul Kersey (Charles Bronson), who turns street avenger following the vicious fates that befall his wife and daughter at the hands of home-invading thugs, the new **Death Wish** works as a solid old-school actioner and rates as a much more polished effort than any of Bronson's **DW** sequels. Our nominally reimagined Paul Kersey (Willis), an ER surgeon in a murder-torn Chicago, is faced with a similar life-shattering tragedy after a trio of lowlifes break into his home, kill his wife (Shue) and put college-bound daughter Jordan (Morrone) in a coma. Like his predecessor, this Paul Kersey pursues a similar path, doggedly tracking down the unknown fugitive perps one by one (while taking time out to foil random street crimes and terminate predators he encounters along the way), with the sometimes questionable help of his underachieving brother Frank (D'Onofrio), while frustrated detectives Raines (Norris) and Jackson (Elise) follow in his wake. With extreme abrupt and senseless violence experts like director Eli (**Hostel**) Roth and writer Joe (**Narc**, **Smokin' Aces**)



Carnahan at the helm, we were expecting the proceedings to be a tad more over the top but, aside from a couple of gore moments, this **Death Wish** rolls along fairly conventional lines, stopping well short of the extreme carnage favored by up-and-coming genre master S. Craig (**Bone Tomahawk**, **Brawl in Cell Block 99**) Zahler or veteran Quentin (**Django Unchained**) Tarantino's occasional excesses. Roth and Carnahan never fail to keep the action moving at a brisk clip, though, while Willis puts his strenuous **Die Hard** training to good use as a resilient older citizen who proves he can take physical punishment as well as dish it out. Viewers may find little in the way of genre surprises but can be assured of a sure-handed return to punchy '70s-style action. Extras on Fox's double-disc Blu-ray + DVD + Digital set include commentary with Roth and producer Roger Birnbaum, extended/deleted scenes, and the making-of featurette **Vengeance and Vision: Directing Death Wish**.

—The Phantom



## GHOST STORIES (2017) 8881/2

D: Jeremy Dyson, Andy Nyman. Andy Nyman, Martin Freeman, Paul Whitehouse, Alex Lawther, Paul Ryan, Louise Atkins. 98 mins. (Shout! Factory) 9/18

Providing old-school eeriness and mounting terror reminiscent of Amicus anthologies and other classic British fright fare, **Ghost Stories** is an outstanding chiller omnibus. Jeremy Dyson and Andy Nyman co-wrote and co-directed the picture, based on their successful and highly acclaimed stage production. The horror here is harrowing and creepy, with the aim of getting under viewers' skin rather than relying on shock-value gore or an overabundance of jump scares. Professor Phillip Goodman (Nyman) is a skeptic and debunker of psychics who has been tasked by his aged mentor with finding logical explanations for three cases he could never disprove. Goodman interviews the people who experienced those life-changing supernatural events, beginning with security employee Tony Matthews (Whitehouse), who has been destabilized by an inexplicable encounter on his rounds. Following this are the misadventures of Simon Rifkind (Lawther), a young man who constantly lies to his parents. Driving home one night in the family car while being admonished by his father on the cell phone, Simon hits something in the road—and that thing is not pleased about it. Businessman Mike Priddle (Freeman) is the subject of the third story. His house is haunted by a poltergeist while his wife is preparing to give birth at the local hospital. The ending of the wraparound story is sure to be a divisive one. Ace performances throughout and gripping storytelling make **Ghost Stories** required viewing for fans of spooky yarns.

—Joseph Perry

## HOSTILES (2017) 8888

D: Scott Cooper. Christian Bale, Rosamund Pike, Wes Studi, Rory Cochrane, Stephen Lang, Jesse Plemons, Michael Beach. 134 mins. (Lionsgate) 4/18

A late-arriving western in a '70s revisionist vein, director/scenarist Cooper's stark platoon trek falls short of classics like director Robert Aldrich and writer Alan Sharp's powerful **Ulzana's Raid** (1972) but still rates as a sturdy sagebrush surprise. Ever-dependable thespian chameleon Bale shifts into full stoic mode as taciturn cavalry veteran Captain Joseph Blocker, a military man whose decades of brutal battle have left him with grudging respect but little love for his Native American foes. All of which makes him an odd and openly hostile choice to lead a squad of troopers on a perilous journey from New Mexico to Montana to deliver dying long-time enemy combatant and Cheyenne leader Chief Yellow Hawk (Studi, the second com-

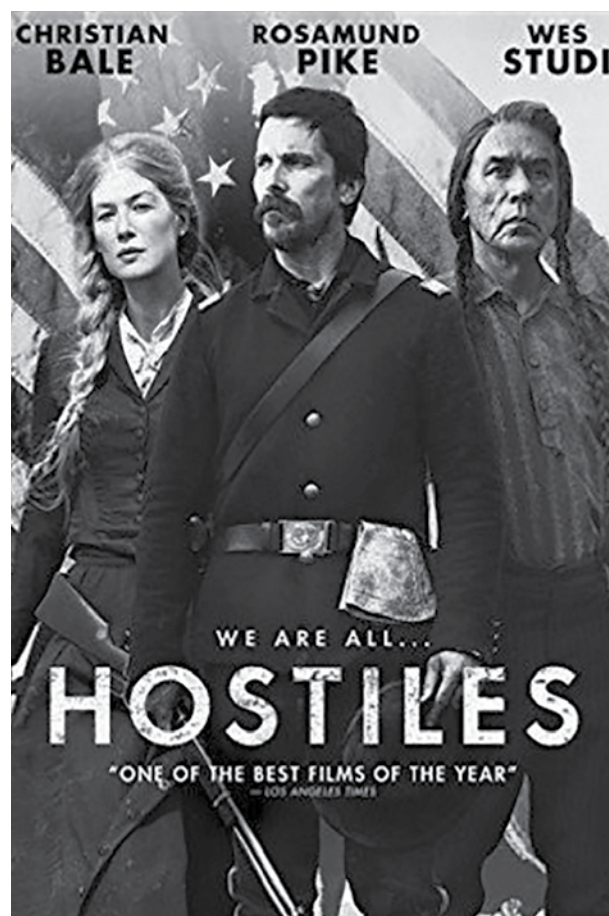
ing of the great Jay Silverheels, who, coincidentally enough, portrayed a Chief Yellow Hawk in the 1954 William Castle western **Masterson of Kansas**) and immediate relatives to their ancestral home. It's not long before the group witnesses the massacre of a frontier family at the hands of Apache renegades; resilient widow and sole survivor Rosalee Quaid (Pike) decides to join the party for the journey, one fraught with further deadly encounters that whittle the cast down to a precious few. Aside from a couple of unlikely tactical moves, **Hostiles** maintains a steady, downbeat tone, presenting, like many of its '70s models, a grim picture of the relentless savagery of the Old West in its violent death throes. Only when the film, which runs on a tad too long in any case, caters to contemporary politically correct sentiments near its too-pat conclusion does it lose its way a bit. Still, fine acting from the leads and veteran character hands like Lang (late of **Don't Breathe**), Peter (Session 9) Mullan (as fellow officers), erstwhile youthful **Dazed and Confused** stoner Cochrane as a grizzled, trail-wise sergeant with a suicidal bent, and Scott (**In Cold Blood**) Wilson as a racist rancher, along with Masanobu Takayanagi's vibrant cinematography, Max Richter's strong score, and barbaric action galore make **Hostiles** a must for old-school sagebrush buffs. Extras include the nearly feature-length behind-the-scenes documentary **A Journey of the Soul: The Making of Hostiles**.

—The Phantom

## THE INSULT (2017) 8888

D: Ziad Doueiri. Adel Karam, Karmel El Basha, Rita Hayek, Christine Choueiri, Camille Salameh, Diamand Bou Ahboud, Talal Jurdi. 112 mins. (Cohen Media Group) 5/18

From a seemingly innocuous argument over a broken gutter belonging to a Lebanese Christian mechanic, Tony Hanna (Karam), protesting the right of a Palestinian refugee public works repairman, Yasser Abdallah Salameh (El Basha), to fix it, director/co-writer Doueiri deconstructs the whole of the sad, pretty much hopeless history of the interlocking and internecine relationships among all the warring ethnic groups set cyclically at one another's throats dating back to the founding of Israel. Yasser, one of the perpetually misplaced whose family was uprooted from temporary refuge in Jordan in the early '70s, when Jordan military turned on Palestinian refugees, lives but is not welcome in Lebanon, especially not by Tony's zealous Christian Party, whose chants and demonstrations against Palestinians are always in the background. Tony's pregnant



wife Shirine (Hayek) is the voice of reason, but Tony insists on going to court where, untutored and hot-headed, he aggravates the judge and is headed for making more trouble. A mediator forces Yasser to apologize, but when they meet in Tony's garage, Tony insults Yasser further saying Ariel Sharon should have killed all the Palestinians. Salameh, a reasonable, put-upon man who knows he has no rights, gives Tony two broken ribs. The politics of grievance informs this award-winning film in knowing and cunning ways—the history of hurt comes alive, illuminating what TV disjointedly lumps together as the Mideast problem—yet the magic in the tale and the mood come from the very human responses to humiliation, anger, revenge and more that have nothing to do with a gutter but what everyone has experienced. Shirine tries to lift her not-yet-recovered husband and their baby is born prematurely. Enter another layer of irresolvable friction: Tony's new lawyer, a politically connected Christian Party member with an axe to grind, and Yasser's civil rights-style lawyer, are warring father and daughter. The trial, like the argument itself, is an ugly affair, appropriated for political purposes and exposing pasts, including massacres, all parties would have preferred to have kept hidden. This is a not-to-be-missed film, right up there with Iranian director Asghar Farhadi's **A Separation** (VS #91). Of course, there are no winners. After all, this is the Middle East.

—Nancy Naglin



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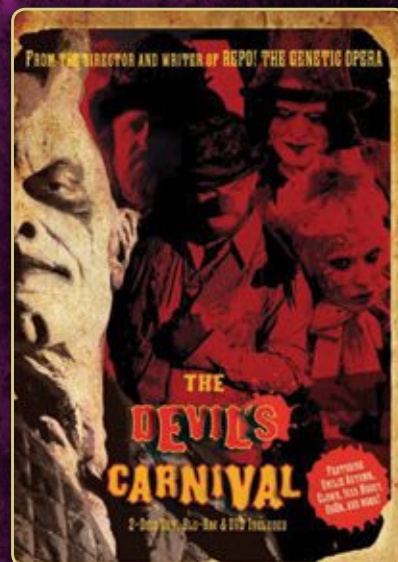
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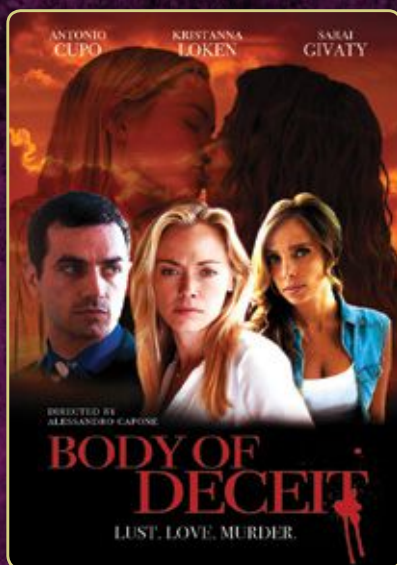
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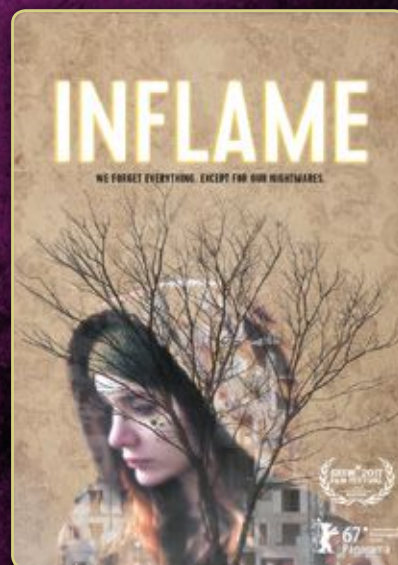
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## The Phantom's INDIE EXTREME!

**ARISE FROM DARKNESS** (2016) Color/  
B&W 888

D: La Raza. Zachary Laoutides, Monica Esmeralda Leon, Samuel Younan, Galilea Mendoza, Nathan Ayala. 90 mins. (Indican Pictures) 3/18

The key crew who brought us the surreal gang drama **Adios Vaya Con Dios** (VS #98)—director La Raza and costars Laoutides and Leon—returns with an even more off-beat and ambitious outing, a combination art-house crime tale and supernatural exploration that shifts between reality and fantasy (and, just as exotically, Mexico and Detroit). Versatile **Adios** lead Laoutides, who receives story and co-directing credit as well as contributing to the ethereal score, plays the aptly named Lazaro, a young man who survives a shooting that accidentally claims the life of his innocent young daughter Maggie (Mendoza). Determined to reconnect with his lost child, and over wife Jessica's (Leon) objections, Lazaro begins consorting with spiritualists and priests, eventually engineering near-death experiments and ultimately earning a local rep as something of a natural psychic himself. La Raza is less interested in following a linear narrative than in weaving extended extrasensory sequences that mix past and present, English and Spanish, color and black-and-white, and earthly and divine dimensions. While some of those reveries achieve their desired effect, others result in more murk than mood. Still, La Raza and companions succeed in creating a striking vision that draws the willing viewer into an alternately tender and violent dream world. The fact that, according to press notes, **Arise from Darkness** is loosely based on a true story about a still-elusive Lazaro only adds to the mystery. Up next for the team: the jazz-themed thriller **Black Ruby**.

**LAST SEEN IN IDAHO** (2018) 888

D: Eric Colley. Hallie Shepherd, Casper Van Dien, Wes Ramsey, Alexis Monnie, Ted Rooney, Richard Carmen, Eric Colley. 110 mins. (Breaking Glass Pictures) 4/18

In 1997, Paul Verhoeven adapted a Robert A. Heinlein novel to produce **Starship Troopers** (VS #27), an over-the-top sci-fi feature starring a handsome actor named Casper Van Dien. The young lead was overshadowed by his material as he was thrust into the spotlight. This means that the cult-hero space cadet is now this story's indie assassin. When Summer (scriptwriter Shepherd) witnesses two murders at her employer's body shop, she is hunted by a hit team, including the scary killer (Van Dien). A failed attempt

causes a car crash, and she is subsequently hospitalized. Two months later, strange warnings of imminent danger stymie her efforts to reconfigure her life. Van Dien arouses moviegoer interest, while Ramsey's **CSI: Miami** credit is cited to attract the couch potatoes. Director Colley and wife Shepherd recruit family, friends and local Pacific Northwest businesses in a group effort that infuses professionalism with grunge rock grit. Shepherd's inner strength makes her credible as an ordinary employee caught up in a perilous situation. Ramsey, who plays the friendly Franco, manipulates his audience just as his character messes with Summer's head. Colley integrates these elements to fashion an entertaining crime drama.

—Ronald Charles Epstein

**THE MAN FROM OUTER SPACE** (2017)

888

D: Ben Hall. Christopher Mychael Watson, Erica Auerbach, Aliyah Conley, Darren Hummel, Jordan Dee Crabbtree, Todd Christian Elliott. 75 mins. (Indican Pictures) 3/18

Not quite the sci-fi adventure its poster and title might indicate, **The Man from Outer Space** instead beams down as a slight but diverting tale about struggling screenwriter Louis (Watson), who has a single weekend to finish a spec script that his low-rent agent Kyle (Hummel) has promised to smarmy producer Trevor (Crabbtree). Anyone who's ever tried to meet a tight writing (or other) deadline while being beset by pests and interruptions (in Louis' case, impatient career woman wife Alyssa [Auerbach] and resentful "neglected" young daughter Makayla [Conley]) will relate to our protagonist's plight. Our story splits time between Louis' naggy reality and the world unfolding in his screenplay, where he imagines himself an astronaut stranded on a mysterious planet that turns out to be a future Earth. There, he encounters a primitive tribeswoman (Auerbach) and her offspring (Conley), with whom he forms an impromptu family unit until his serenity is disrupted by fellow spacemen (Hummel, Crabbtree) who want to break up his happy home. While Louis' fantasy works well enough as a therapeutic daydream, it's a stretch to believe he could sell such self-referential B-movie material to even an indie studio. That improbability aside, **Man** unspools as a pleasant enough affair that's refreshingly race irrelevant (Louis and family are African Americans) and free of the ignorant brand of contrived snark that infects so many contempo films. At the same time, those looking for biting Hollywood satire in a Coen Bros vein won't find it in this kid-glove affair. On a more obscure note, **The Man from Outer Space** may be the first flick about a black American who fantasizes about being an astronaut since Christopher St. John's edgier offbeat 1972 character study **Top of the Heap** (Code Red).

—The Phantom



**MY FRIEND DAHMER** (2017) 888

D: Marc Meyers. Ross Lynch, Alex Wolff, Anne Heche, Dallas Roberts, Vincent Kartheiser. 107 mins. (MVD) 4/18

Jeffrey Dahmer (Lynch) has yet to kill anyone, but his last year of high school turns out to be the crucible from which he will emerge as a monster. His home life is collapsing, with his ineffectual father (Roberts) and unstable mother (Heche) moving toward open (and narcissistic) warfare. His twin obsessions (dead animals and a male jogger) are both intensifying and moving closer and closer to horrifying fusion. And at school, he is friendless. Until, that is, he turns being weird into a performance, faking a seizure in the middle of a crowded hallway. His willingness to pull pranks like this draws the attention of Wolff and friends, and the Dahmer Fan Club is created. Though Dahmer is thrilled to finally have people to hang out with, it is clear that the guys regard him as little more than an amusing mascot. This has been a difficult film to evaluate, and the Roman score you see has fluctuated up and down over the course of writing this review. On the one hand, the film is undeniably well made and the performances are uniformly strong. Lynch, in particular, is terrific—he comes across as a sullen, wounded, grieving animal on the razor's edge of turning rabid. On the other hand, the beats that the narrative hits (loneliness, obsession, self-loathing, etc.) may not ring false but neither are they exactly eye-opening. So don't expect any epiphanies here. As for the nature/nurture question with regards to how this killer was forged, the film keeps options open, though leans somewhat toward the nurture side of the equation and does so in fairly expected ways. Still, the understated, deliberately paced narrative builds to quietly chilling moments. Special features include an interview with Lynch and a behind-the-scenes slide show.

—David Annandale

## THE POST (2017) ♂♂♂1/2

D: Steven Spielberg. Meryl Streep, Tom Hanks, Sarah Paulson, Bob Odenkirk, Tracy Letts, Bradley Whitford, Bruce Greenwood, Matthew Rhys. 116 mins. (Fox) 4/18

This taut political and personal drama brilliantly captures the Nixon Vietnam era mood and time pegged to the suspense, legal ramifications, and consequences, personal and political, of the publication of Daniel Ellsberg's secretly copied revelatory Pentagon Papers. *Post* publisher Katharine "Kay" Graham (Streep), a financial novice (tutored in real life by Warren Buffett), always the only woman in the room, alternately patronized or ignored, is, nonetheless, fighting to take the nearly broke, family-owned paper public. Once *The New York Times* publishes a sampling of the Pentagon Papers, gung-ho *Post* editor Ben Bradlee (Hanks) is desperate to get his hands on the rest. The Nixon administration secures an injunction prevent-

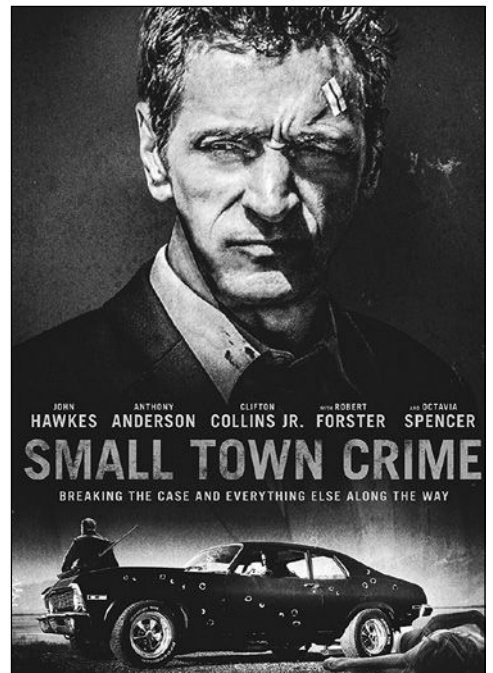
ing the *Times* from publishing any more of Ellsberg's cache, the newspaper wars are on, and, with the country hyperventilating about both restrictions on a free press and Vietnam lies dating back to Truman, we sit back and watch the axe tickle all throats: LBJ's Secretary of Defense and Graham's personal friend Robert McNamara (Greenwood) appeals to "Kay" for protection, Graham worries about losing her financial deal, Bradlee and staff risk jail, and a gaggle of lawyers fights variously to control Graham, cave or take on the government. The film shows how interconnected and clubby the worlds of journalism and politics once were, but even so Nixon was banning *Post* reporters from covering his daughter's wedding. Hanks and Streep morph into the body language and mannerisms of the protags, though Streep's Kay, possibly modeled on Graham's memoir *Personal History* in which she admits to struggling to overcome gender inferiority, seems one note, fluttering constantly like an airhead. Spielberg can't resist an E.T.-like mushy mother-daughter bedroom scene to soft-pedal the 1963 suicide of Graham's abusive and belittling husband Philip. While Nixon on tape, inspiring future Trumps, threatens the first amendment, Graham, impaled at the intersection of institutionalized misogyny and the illegal arrogance of power, finally realizes she is the most important person in the room and ought to run the show.

—Nancy Naglin

## SMALL TOWN CRIME (2017) ♂♂♂

D: Eshon Nelms, Ian Nelms. John Hawkes, Octavia Spencer, Anthony Anderson, Robert Forster, Clifton Collins, Jr., Jeremy Ratchford, John Lafferty. 92 mins. (Lionsgate) 3/18

An entertaining throwback to the Tarantino '90s, complete with ironic theme song (Eric Burdon's "Good Times"), *Small Town Crime* serves as a prime showcase for veteran character thesp Hawkes (2010 Oscar nominee for *Winter's Bone*), who takes center stage as Mike Kendall, a spacey, alcoholic, middle-aged ex-cop who attempts to get back on track and the road to redemption by unraveling the complex titular case. When Mike discovers a soon-to-be-dead woman at the side of the road, he enlists adoptive bro' (an orphaned Mike, we learn, was raised by a black family) Teddy Banks (Anderson) to help him follow clues that lead to the expected local corruption. Mike and Teddy receive further assistance from the murdered girl's wealthy grandfather Steve Yendel (an ever-welcome Forster, brilliantly understated as ever here) and volatile, vengeance-bent Latino gangbanger Mood (Collins, Jr.), while ignoring the cautionary advice of Mike's worried stepsister Kelly (the seemingly ubiquitous *Hidden Figures* costar Spencer, who also co-produced). *Small Town Crime* stirs all the essential neo-noir ingredients—digressive turns, dark humor and a bloody showdown involving our protags and relentless killers played by Ratchford and Lafferty—into a tasty cocktail that should appeal to old-school



palates. Copious extras include an audio commentary by indie director siblings Eshon and Ian Nelms, a second track where the brothers are joined by cast members and producers, a technical commentary, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and extended/deleted scenes. Withal, *Small Town Crime* arrives as a refreshing surprise.

## SWEET VIRGINIA (2017) ♂♂♂

D: Jamie M. Dags. Jon Bernthal, Christopher Abbott, Imogen Poots, Rosemarie DeWitt, Odessa Young, Jonathan Tucker. 93 mins. (Shout! Factory) 4/18

While it opens with a literal bang (three actually) in the form of a triple homicide ultimately linked to a *Double Indemnity*-style plot, the rest of *Sweet Virginia* unfolds with a quiet stealth inexorably building to a climactic showdown. Former rodeo rider Sam (Bernthal), suffering from a slow-acting degenerative condition, soon crosses paths with the perp, Elwood (Abbott), who's laying low in the motel Sam manages, situated on the outskirts of a small Alaskan town. Both hail from the titular state and form a tentative bond, even though Sam remains rightfully wary of the stranger. As the mystery, involving sudden widows Lila (Poots), a possible co-conspirator in the case, and Bernadette (DeWitt), with whom Sam's been carrying on a long-time affair, gradually unravels, tension escalates among the four principals, while a side thread details Sam's friendship with lonely motel worker Maggie (Young). The deft handiwork of debuting British screenwriters The China Brothers (Paul and Benjamin), *Sweet Virginia* conveys a strong sense of small-town life, replete with credible characters exchanging naturalistic dialogue. If the film has a flaw, it's that the tone is occasionally too low-key for its own good. Overall, though, *Sweet Virginia* is a locale well worth visiting. ♂

—The Phantom

## GRUMPY OLD CRITICS (Say the Darnedest Things) DEPT.

### NOT READY FOR PLAYER ONE

"So much of *Ready Player One* is assembled from the detritus of our past that it is less a film and more an overstuffed cultural recycling bin."  
Barry Hertz, *Globe and Mail*

"There's still something a little icky about a movie that data-mines the pop culture past of middle-aged men so shamelessly."  
Rob Thomas, *Capital Times*

It's fanboy fellatio..."  
Sean Burns, *The ARTery*

"*Ready Player One* represents the death of the imagination, a society governed entirely by gatekeepers, where the only difference between the corporates and the rebels is that the suits wear suits."  
Alex Doeanu, *Trespas*

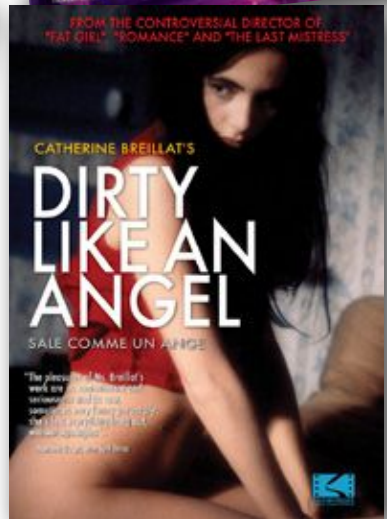
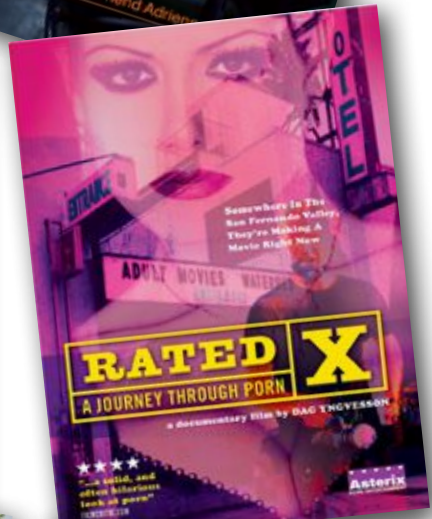
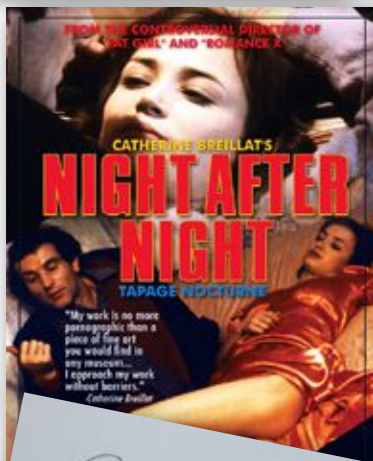
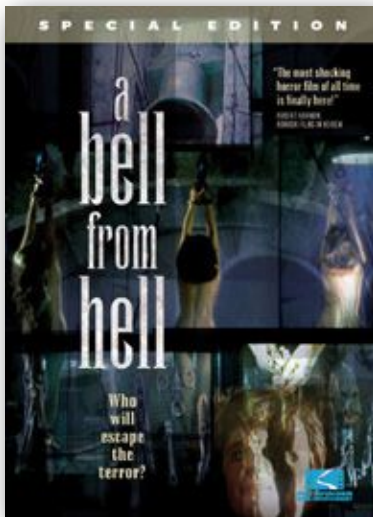
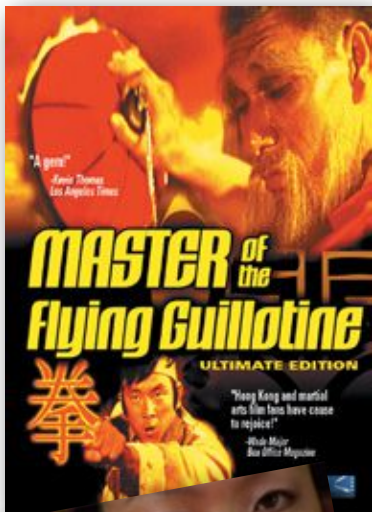
"A boring, vapid and tedious video game that lacks a heart, mind, soul, personality or anything else that's part of the spectrum of humanism."  
Avi Offer, *NYC Movie Guru*

"A nightmare of nothingness, of empty, soulless wankery, that serves only to reassure male dorks that their pop-culture obsessions make them special, and will make cute girls like them."  
MaryAnn Johanson, *Flick Philosopher*

♂



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# ATTACK OF THE MANI-YACKS!

## As Told To Dan Cziraky

Fueling the Monster Kid craze of 1963 were all sorts of products based on the classic monster films of the 1930s-1950s: model kits, magazines, and a set of six colorful, iron-on T-shirt transfers by Kaumagraph featuring Dracula, Frankenstein's Monster, the Wolf Man, the Creature from the Black Lagoon, the Mummy, and the Phantom of the Opera. Marketed under the Mani-Yack brand, the Mani-Yack Monsters were favorites of kids watching **Chiller Theatre** and dancing to "The Monster Mash." The detailed line art and bright colors were appealing to young Monster Kids, as well as their teenaged counterparts going off to drive-ins. Today, you can still buy Mani-Yack Monsters T-shirts, stickers, patches, pins, wallets, and even throw pillows, thanks to the efforts of Illinois-based commercial illustrator and sculptor Jeff Carlson. The great news is that there are now some 50 Mani-Yack Monsters designs to choose from, with more being added all the time.—DC

**DAN CZIRAKY** Tell us about the history of the original Mani-Yack art and transfers.

**JEFF CARLSON** Well, my understanding is that the original six Universal monster transfers (Frankenstein, Dracula, Wolf Man, Mummy, Phantom and Creature) were licensed around 1963 by Kaumagraph, a 100-year-old company that basically pioneered the iron-on heat transfer. They've produced thousands of different designs/patterns over the years, primarily for the commercial fabrics/sewing industry. Sports themes as well as other pop culture tie-ins were also produced by this company.



**DC** How did you become involved with reviving the brand?

**JC** About ten years ago, in an online message board dedicated primarily to classic horror movies and vintage collectibles, a few of us were having a conversation about the original monster transfers—specifically, how cool it would have been if they had produced more monster character iron-ons beyond just the six I mentioned. My being a professional commercial illustrator by trade urged me to pick up the ball and run with it before someone else did.

**DC** What made you go beyond just iron-on transfers?

**JC** Well, transfers and T-shirts are great, but you can only own so many. Several collectors started asking for other items that were easier to display but equally fun and useful, so I started offering custom-printed throw pillows as well as handmade wallets, stickers, enamel pins, and embroidered patches.

**DC** What were your first original Mani-Yack designs? How many designs are you up to now?

**JC** The first two new "retro" characters I offered were Dr. Phibes and Vincent Price. They were immediately a big hit, so I've kept making additional ones ever since. I'm up to 50-plus new illustrations.

**DC** How would you describe the style of the original six Mani-Yack Monsters designs? Was it difficult learning to replicate that style for the new designs you've added to the line?

**JC** The vintage illustrations weren't particularly unique, in my opinion, being fairly straightforward line drawings—pen/brush and ink—but the proprietary technology that Kaumagraph used to screen the secondary color (blue, green or pink) is what gives the whole thing a very special look. The original designs were most likely "mechanical layouts" consisting of black line art on bristol board with individual acetate overlays for the secondary color, the red accents and the white highlights.

**DC** Some of the original six designs, such as Frankenstein's Monster and the Phantom of the Opera, weren't very screen accurate. In fact, the Phantom is based on the James Cagney makeup in *Man of a Thousand Faces*. Have you done, or considered doing, more accurate designs?

**JC** Now, keep in mind these original six transfers were produced in 1963 at pretty much the height of the monster craze. These designs/illustrations were heavily influenced by other products being made at the same time. Frankenstein tended to bear more likeness to Glenn Strange than Boris Karloff. The Phantom did indeed look more like the James Cagney version, as did the Aurora model box art. Speaking of that, the Creature also picked up a set of sharp teeth around this time



thanks to that same Aurora influence, *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine, etc.—Dracula being a spot-on Bela Lugosi characterization. The Wolf Man and Mummy are fairly screen-accurate representations of Universal film make-ups. As for me doing new (more accurate) illustrations of Franky and the Phantom, I'd prefer to do Karloff and Chaney tribute portraits without makeup instead.

**DC** How are you balancing the demand from nostalgia-based old-school monster fans with newer, more modern fans?

**JC** Honestly, my personal preference is to illustrate some of the more obscure "B-movie" characters from the 1950s-1970s. You know, oddball monsters from low-budget movies that never really got any merchandising opportunities. That said, I've also been hired by some current license holders to create illustrations for more modern horror characters from the 1980s-1990s. Keep an eye out in the coming months for those!

**DC** You've also done some classic horror prop replicas. Do you plan on doing more?

**JC** Yes, I'm also a trained sculptor and fine jeweler. Over the years I've dabbled in mask making and prop fabrication. Two of my more popular efforts have been my 1931 screen-accurate "Medallion of Dracula" prop, as well as my "Amulet of Kharis" piece from the Universal Mummy movie series, each one being a uniquely handcrafted collectible, as opposed to commercial mass-produced retail items. My Dracula medallion was actually used in the Amy Heckerling film *Vamps* and was worn by actor Malcolm McDowell, so it has a Hollywood provenance all its own now.





*DC Do you see yourself continuing to expand the Mani-Yack brand? Where would you like to see it in, say, five years?*

*JC* Frankly, I'll keep drawing new/retro monsters as long as people keep asking for and enjoying them. I never really know where this will take me. This product line has been growing steadily for 10 years; I could have never predicted that.

*DC Tell us a bit more about your own artistic background. Where did you study art? Who are your favorite artists?*

*JC* Well, I've been illustrating and sculpting professionally for over 30 years now. No formal training, as such, skills being continually developed either "on the job" or during my personal time. I was very lucky to have excellent art teachers in elementary and vocational instructors in high school. A short list of my favorite/most influential artists: Bernie Wrightson, Mike Kaluta, Jim Steranko, Basil Gogos, Alex Toth, Wally Wood, Reynold Brown, to name just a few.

*DC What appeals to you, as a classic horror fan?*

*JC* For me, it's about trying to recapture the analog vibe of monster stuff from my youth. There's something about the simple thrill of catching an old black & white horror movie on late-night TV.

*DC With new streaming services such as AMC's Shudder, it seems horror is at a healthy point right now. Do you think it could become oversaturated and burn out fans? Or does horror truly "never die"?*

*JC* Horror themes, as entertainment, escapism or social commentary, will always be with us. Naturally, certain aspects cycle, going in and out of favor, but in my opinion there's an inner need for this type of expression/outlet that will never die.

Check out Jeff Carlson's latest Mani-Yack Monsters offerings on Instagram under "maniyackmonsters," Facebook as "MANI-YACK Monster Designs," and eBay as seller "maniyackmonsters." 

## The Phantom's FAVE '50s PHLASHBACKS

OLIVE FILMS

(\$24.95 DVD) 5/18

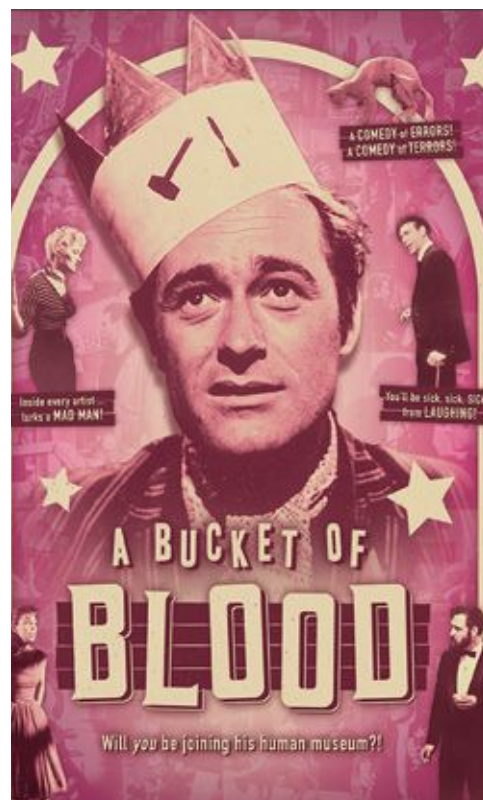
**A BUCKET OF BLOOD** (1959)B&W

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
D: Roger Corman. Dick Miller, Barboura Morris, Antony Carbone, Ed Nelson, Judy Bamber, John Brinkley, Bert Convy. 66 mins.

Corman's deathless sick-joke quickie receives its first widescreen DVD incarnation, courtesy of Olive Films. Yours truly grew up in an area virtually devoid of drive-ins, and few of AIP's teen-targeted B-film fare played in our nabe hardtops. The sole Corman flick we recall catching was 1957's **Not of This Earth**, produced for Allied Artists rather than AIP, which surfaced on the bottom end of a genre double bill at the old Bel-laire Theater in Hollis, Queens. Can't remember the main feature, but we youngsters were knocked out by **NOTE**'s raw subversive chills, from predatory alien Paul Birch's literally lethal stare to his flying brain-sucking pet critter to foxy and feisty Beverly Garland's no-nonsense heroine to Dick Miller's darkly comic turn as the planet's hippest vacuum cleaner salesman. We saw a couple more AIP and Filmgroup (Corman's spin-off company) efforts, **Diary of a High School Bride** and **The Last Woman on Earth** among them, at our beloved triple-feature Savoy Theater grindhouse in Jamaica, Queens, but it wasn't until probably 1963 or so that Corman and AIP movie packages began surfacing in bulk on NYC TV, mostly on ABC 7's 4:30 Movie and late-night airings on the same channel, perfect showtimes for high-school kids and insomniacs, respectively (we would watch both time slots).

While it was Corman's companion celluloid sick joke, **The Little Shop of Horrors** (1960), likewise scripted by the prolific and oft-brilliant Charles B. Griffith, author of such '50s genre treasures as **It Conquered the World**, **Beast from Haunted Cave**, **Teenage Doll** and **Rock All Night**, that went on to win major fame as a stage and movie musical, **A Bucket of Blood** was the one that scored in these quarters with its knowing, witty take on indolent hipsters, wannabe artistes, pretentious poets, easily conned squares, corrupt narcs, and greedy entrepreneurs—all portrayed by key members of the informal Mighty Corman Art Players—sort of a Beat bonfire of the vanities that required only 66 minutes to hit and eviscerate its marks. Miller—who would turn down the Seymour role in **Little Shop** because he felt it was too similar and wanted to kick the **Bucket** brand, bequeathing the role instead to pal and frequent screen partner Jonathan Haze—makes an iconic impression as the Jerry Lewisesque Walter Paisley, a bumbling



busboy at the Yellow Door Cafe who yearns to become a hot sculptor, the better to win the respect of the in crowd and the love of kindly Beat chick Carla (an appealing Morris). Alas, Walter's efforts initially lead to naught, until he's accidentally turned on to a **House of Wax** opportunity, covering his neighbor's deceased cat (whom he'd unwittingly stabbed) in clay and passing it off as a bold work entitled—what else?—**Dead Cat**. The immediate adulation and envy Walter's act engenders naturally leaves him hungry for more, so, in short order (it's a short film), he creates three additional masterpieces by killing and covering a deserving narc (Convy), an arrogant model (the beautiful Bamber), and an unfortunate workman who sacrifices his head in the name of art. Unfortunately for Walter, success proves sadly fleeting.

Olive's new edition arrives sans extras beyond English subtitles, but it's well worth having a look at this addictive cult classic in widescreen as nature intended. (To get to know Dick, we highly recommend Elijah Drenner's doc **That Guy Dick Miller** [VS #105]). Joe Dante has famously recruited Miller to cameo as all kinds of different characters bearing the Walter Paisley name, a trend continued by other filmmakers as well. In fact, by our (and IMDb's) count the actor has played at least a half-dozen Walter Paisleys, most recently, beret and cigarette holder intact, in Michael Schlesinger's fictional homage to obscure comedy teams, **The Misadventures of Biffle and Shooster** (page 10). Meantime, be sure to remember, per Yellow Door poet laureate Maxwell H. Brock (Julian Burton): "Life is an obscure hobo bumming a ride on the omnibus of art." 





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# BEST OF THE FESTS: MIDWEST WEIRDFEST!

By Joseph Perry

Eau Claire, Wisconsin's Micon Downtown Budget Cinema hosted the second annual Midwest Weirdfest, March 9–11, 2018, with an impressive array of unconventional genre-movie fare. Festival director Dean Bertram—who also heads up Australia's A Night of Horror and Fantastic Planet film fests (**VS** #106)—selected what he called “a weird and wonderful gamut, ranging from the boldest and bloodiest in sci-fi and horror, through documentaries of the strange and macabre, to twisting thrillers and erotic underground dramas.” I had the opportunity to view seven of these fresh offerings.

Modern spaghetti western meets neo-noir in writer/director Usher Morgan's terrific **Pickings**, which won the fest's Best Film award. This low-budget effort looks amazing, adopting a post-**Sin City** (**VS** #56) vibe and proudly exhibiting its exploitation roots. Elyse Price stars as Jo Lee-Haywood, a widowed mom who owns a bar where daughter Scarlet (Katie Vincent) has started working. When a small-time local mobster gang comes calling for a shakedown, Elyse rises to the challenge, as secrets from her past are gradually revealed. Other standout members in a terrific cast include Joel Bernard as family friend and protector Boone Pickens and Yaron Urbas as criminal creep Sam “Hollywood” Barone. Besides solid mom vs. mob material, Morgan also offers plenty in the character development department, especially when it comes to the fracturing relationship between two-fisted Elyse and pacifist Scarlet. **Pickings** is a giddy combination of original and familiar motifs, and it would be poor form to give away many of Morgan's stylistic choices. Suffice it to say that viewers are in for a fair amount of light and shadow play, some animation, and much more. Co-star Vincent also composed the marvelous original music; she displays the chops to be a breakout star in both arenas. **Pickings** is crackling with energy and, though it may baffle some viewers, is sure to please many genre-fare lovers.

Co-directors Rob Cousineau and Chris Rosik's lo-fi sci-fi comedy **Future** won the fest's Best Screenplay award. This time-travel tale focuses on slacker and potential suicide Doug Erickson (Joshua P. Cousineau), who makes a deal with a character simply called Time Traveler (Phreddy Wischusen). With the help of his two eerie, silent masked companions, Time Traveler informs Doug he can avoid suicide only if he

kills a certain human target within a short time frame. Doug decides to try to find purpose in life but falls victim to both comic and tragic circumstances. Claire Sloma gives a fine supporting performance as Doug's girlfriend Alma, while Joshua P. Cousineau (who co-wrote the script with Rob Cousineau and Doug Kolbicz) and Wischusen make for a fine comic duo.

James Bushe's U.K. horror comedy **Cannibals and Carpet Fitters** delivers in both the horror and humor categories, hitting all the right notes and managing to give viewers characters to cheer for. Richard Lee O'Donnell's sharp screenplay tells the story of a crew of likeable, if sometimes lazy, carpet installation professionals and their run-ins with a family that prefers its meat fresh and human. The ensemble cast is a blast, with Darren Sean Enright and O'Donnell standing out as a man with marital troubles and his supportive buddy, respectively. The gore effects are first-rate, with some wonderfully unique kills, and the film boasts its share of suspense as well.

The micro-budget slasher affair **Attack of the Tattie-Bogle** is long on chases and kills and short on character development, but director Peter Marcy's 10-year project is worth a watch. Marcy costars, along with his co-writers Adam Anderson and Joe Marcy, as part of a group of friends who go to a Wisconsin lake for an Independence Day vacation. As soon as they separate, the titular masked killer (tattie-bogle is a Scottish term for scarecrow) comes calling. The characters are older than the usual slasher-flick targets, so Marcy and company offer a fresh slant and play freely with standard genre expectations. Although **Attack of the Tattie-Bogle** has a few shortcomings due to its minuscule budget, the film does supply sufficient rewards for slasher fans seeking something different.

Director/co-writer/producer Seth Breedlove and his Small Town Monsters crew create yet another excellent cryptozoology documentary with **The Flatwoods Monster: A Legacy of Fear**. **The Flatwoods Monster** examines the 1952 case of a group of young boys who come face-to-face with the mysterious, otherworldly titular creature and the investigation that followed. As with his earlier **Beast of Whitehall**, **Minerva Monster**, and **Invasion on Chestnut Ridge**, Breedlove uses an even-keeled, highly researched approach, with interviews from eyewitnesses and local townsfolk, presenting a polished effort that neither sensationalizes the story nor makes light of its participants. Filled with gorgeous shots of local scenery, animated re-creations of the sighting and similar events, and down-to-earth personalities, this documentary reps another home run from the Small Town Monsters team.

**The Moose Head Over the Mantel** is a unique anthology that looks at the horrors that unfold in a single house about every two decades, from 1881 through 1983. Written by Jessi Gotta, who also helmed one segment, with five additional directors each tackling a different decade, the



A dangerous stop at the Midwest Weirdfest.

film is seen through the eyes of mounted stuffed animal heads. This approach makes for a kind of found-footage feel, with static cameras in place of the usual shaky ones. Turn-of-the-century spiritualism meets suggestions of notorious historical murders, so plenty of gothic horror is at play, but Gotta and her fellow directors also examine depraved violence toward fellow humans and dark secrets among families as well. A strong live theatre ambience runs throughout, from the staging and direction to the actors' performances. For viewers looking for an offbeat movie with a true sense of the macabre, **The Moose Head Over the Mantel** should reward.

Director Justin Decloux's Canadian indie **Impossible Horror** concerns Lily (Haley Walker), an aspiring filmmaker in search of a subject, and Hannah (Creedence Wright), a homeless woman she meets. The two attempt to find the source of a mysterious scream heard nightly in their neighborhood. Odd occurrences befall the pair, while a hoodie-wearing gang adds to the danger. The film tries hard to be experimental but comes off as not too far removed from what one character describes as a freshman film school project. About a quarter of the film is made up of random shorts, which, considering **Impossible Horror's** 76-minute running time, feel like padding. Decloux has some good ideas, and this film could have probably been edited into a terrific short. As a feature, though, it comes across as too self-conscious and disjointed.

The British supernatural documentary **Borley Rectory** (**VS** #106) continued its award-winning run on the fest circuit, picking up the Best Documentary prize. Amara Cash won Best Director for her fashion-meets-fetishes character study **Daddy Issues**, while the outrageous cop comedy **Officer Pigsley** earned the Independent Spirit Award. ☿



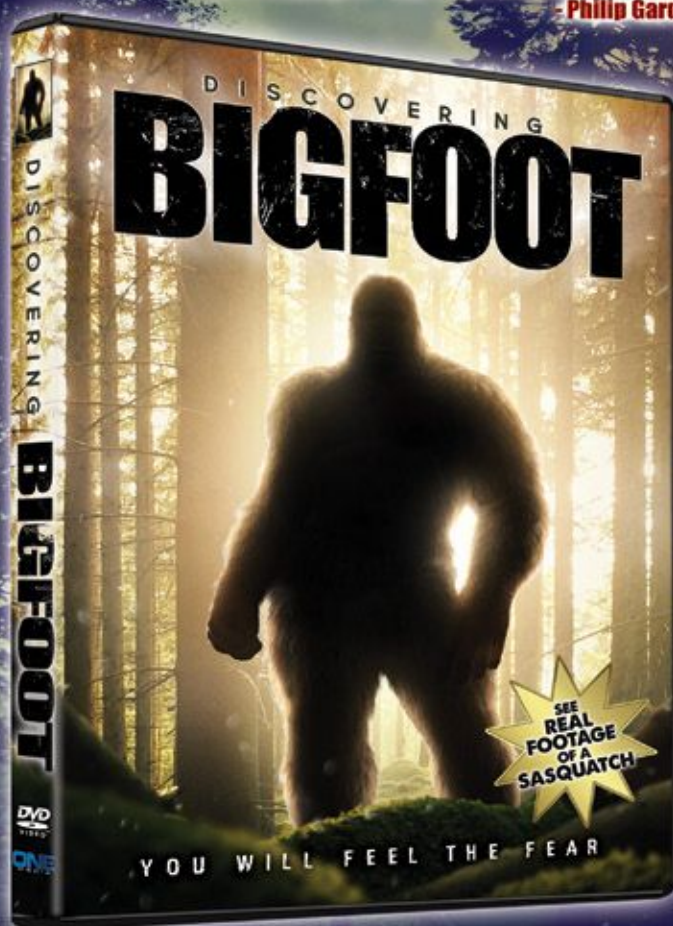
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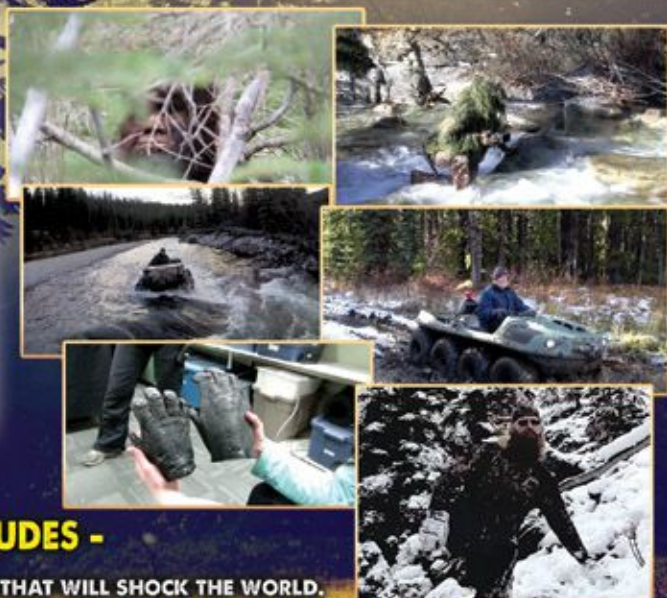
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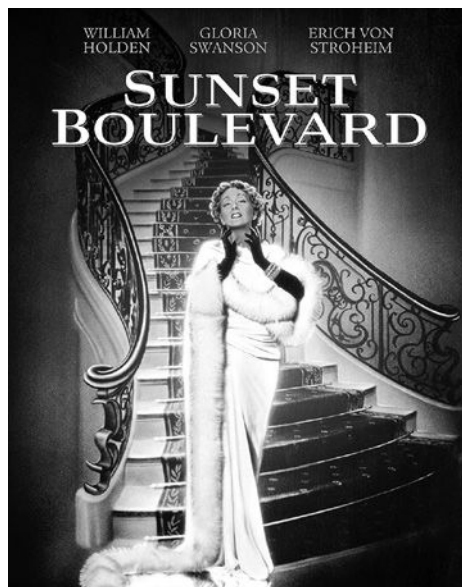
Axes and Picks with VS Critic  
Tim Ferrante & Scott Voisin

'Scope scribes Scott Voisin and Tim Ferrante spotlight two films whose main characters are ambitious wordsmiths. It's tragic authors time with Billy Wilder's megaclassic **Sunset Boulevard** (1950) and Billy Ray's tense docudrama **Shattered Glass** (2003).

**Tim Ferrante:** 'Twas you who came up with this season's column idea of movies with writers as the main character, proving that you do occasionally swap a thinking cap for your regular tin foil headgear. My fave of such a subgenre is **Sunset Boulevard**, a film you'd yet to see. Coincidentally, your fave is a docudrama I'd not seen entitled **Shattered Glass**. **Sunset** is an original screenplay that depicts Hollywood's darker corners. It centers on forgotten and delusional silent screen star Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson) and her reluctant boy toy writer Joe Gillis (William Holden), on whom she pins all hopes for love and her triumphant comeback...I mean...*return* to the big screen. Both are told through flashback with **Shattered** sharing in the delusional angle via Stephen Glass, the real-life rising star of the mid-'90s at **The New Republic**, a politically liberal magazine with sterling credentials for reporting accuracy. Both ingeniously unravel the termites beneath our veneer, exposing our most unbecoming sides and the loathsome destruction of which they're capable.

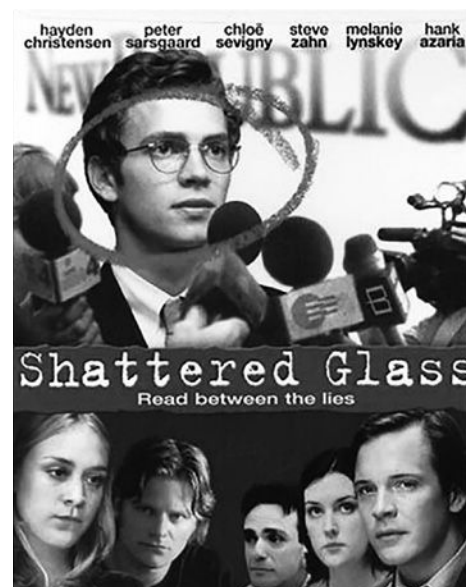
**Scott Voisin:** I'm going to use that last sentence as the basis for creating a "Tim Ferrante Translator" app, which will decipher your jumbled mess of words and turn them into straightforward (albeit pointless and misguided) observations the rest of us can actually understand. Until then, let's talk **Shattered Glass**. There have been many great movies about writers (**Misery**, **Barton Fink** and **Adaptation** come to mind), but I keep coming back again and again to this underrated gem based on a true story. Hayden Christensen plays Glass, a skilled but insecure twenty-something journalist who is eager to please and craves validation from his peers. When his entertaining article about a computer hacker comes under intense scrutiny by a rival scribe, Glass is forced to defend his reporting to new editor Chuck Lane (Peter Sarsgaard) and prove the piece is fact instead of fiction. What follows is a riveting depiction of a talented kid backed into a corner scrambling to salvage his credibility while his beleaguered boss tries to do the same with the magazine's reputation.

**TF:** \*Yawn\* News Flash: **Shattered** isn't "riveting." It's medium-paced intrigue at



best. Its only hooks are 1) it's true and 2) the big reveal: Is Glass a genuine wunderkind or just a convincing liar? Still, I didn't dislike it because it focused on the scandal just as it ramps up and compresses same into an interesting movie. When stacked against **Sunset's** menagerie of characters, there simply is no match. Frankly, I think we're unfairly comparing real life to the boundless imagination of scriptwriters whose Norma Desmond is a human nightmare: A passive-aggressive sociopath with added layers of shameless narcissism and suicidal tendencies. She imprisons the desperate Gillis not with locked doors but her unpredictable personality and freewheeling wealth. He's showered with luxury gifts, caviar, champagne and extravagant wardrobe. It's a gigantic character unlike any other and Swanson slaughters it. Meanwhile, Gillis is falling in love with his friend's fiancée, who also finds him an attractive alternative. It's all an unbearable and ugly collision of circumstances with Gillis struggling to save what little remains of his self-respect.

**SV:** What makes **Shattered** such an interesting film is that the protagonist is someone we can all relate to. Who among us hasn't busted our butts working on something so that others will be happy, thus earning us a hoped-for pat on the back as recognition for a job well done? Glass' weakness is that he coveted the approval of his bosses so much that he didn't let pesky things like facts and ethics get in the way of a good story. **Sunset's** Gillis, on the other hand, is a character that could only be concocted in Hollywood: A failing, down-on-his-luck writer meets an aging, wealthy has-been who smothers him with material pleasures in exchange for polishing a bad script which she hopes will re-ignite her acting career. A solid premise for a movie, no question about it, but it's a screenwriter's wet dream that doesn't come close to the gravitas of Glass' situation. Both films are brilliantly executed, but in this case, I think real life is much more engrossing and engaging than "reel" life.



**TF:** Glass' behavior seemed borderline bipolar. One side trying to please, the other an insecure worm who decided he was smarter than everyone else. And when it all fell apart, his nonsensical lament left me somewhat ambivalent. Empathy for a self-destructive jackass, regardless of the cause, is difficult to muster. As we said, this is reel vs. real life, but I can't imagine ever watching **Shattered** again. **Sunset** is lasting and intoxicating entertainment, playing almost like a film noir with its dark cinematography and discomfiting atmosphere. Unlike the complex Glass, Gillis' moral corruption is clearly realized. The notion of a quiet desk job back home in Ohio is preferable to betraying a friend and the acidic advances of Desmond's spidery digits, incessant suspicion and poisonous anxiety. At the time, MGM's Louis B. Mayer scolded Paramount's director Wilder saying, "You have disgraced the industry that made and fed you!" But it's the very qualities that Mayer found so disagreeable that make **Sunset** a certified classic motion picture, ranking #12 on AFI's Top 100. Reel life and all.

**SV:** This may have been a "scandalous" portrayal of Hollywood when it was first released, but watching it decades later, it plays simply as a drama set within the industry, not some kind of scathing indictment of it. There are plenty of other—and better—flicks that have skewered show business, but that's a different topic for another time. **Shattered** lacks the obvious prestige associated with Billy Wilder, Gloria Swanson and a bunch of Tinseltown hotshots playing themselves, but it is a buried treasure waiting to be discovered by discerning cinephiles. Anyone who knows Christensen only from his portrayal of Anakin Skywalker in the **Star Wars** prequels will be shocked to see that he can actually *act* (apparently, all it takes is a good script and some meaningful direction). He's superbly backed by Sarsgaard, Hank Azaria, Steve Zahn and other talented thespians. **Sunset** may have a place in history, but for those who aren't history buffs, it offers a slight yet entertaining diversion that doesn't quite live up to its reputation. ⚡

## REELING BACK MONDO SCIPIO!

By Nancy Naglin

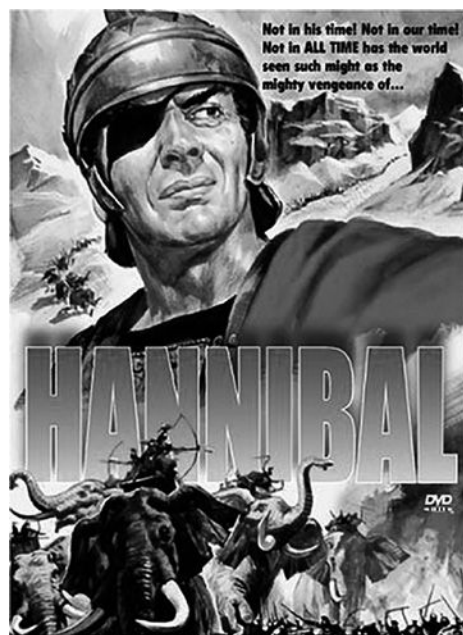
### HANNIBAL (1960) ♂♂♂

D: Edgar G. Ulmer (Carlo Ludovico Bragaglia, uncredited). Victor Mature, Gabriele Ferzetti, Rita Gam, Rick Battaglia, Milly Vitale, Mario Girotti (aka Terence Hill), Carlo Pedersoli (aka Bud Spencer). 103 mins. (VCI Entertainment)

### SCIPIO AFRICANUS: THE DEFEAT OF HANNIBAL (1937) B&W ♂♂♂

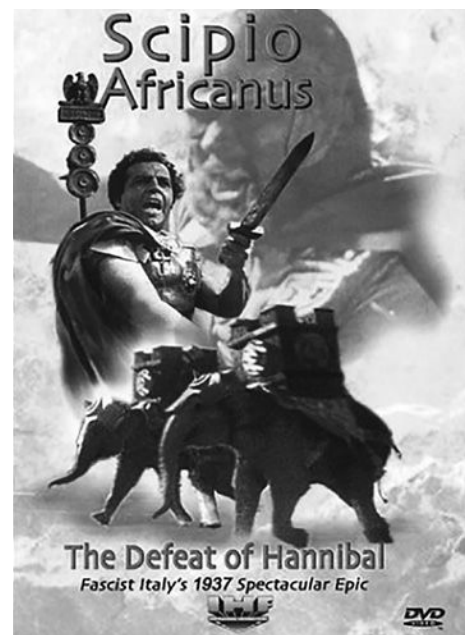
D: Carmine Gallone. Annibale Ninchi, Camillo Pillotto, Fosco Giachetti, Francesca Braggiotti, Marcello Girorda, Memo Benassi. 83 mins. (International Historic Films)

The success of **Hannibal**, an Italian production financed by Warner Brothers to catch the historical epic/sword-and-sandal wave, hinged on two veteran cinematic figures, Victor Mature, contemplating retirement but gamely channeling the charisma of **Samson and Delilah** (1949) and **The Robe** (1953), and Edgar G. Ulmer, long past the heyday of **The Black Cat** (1934) and **Detour** (1945), then in Europe scrounging for work, soon to direct the ultra low-budget Stateside sci-fi double feature **Beyond the Time Barrier** and **The Amazing Transparent Man** (1960). The time is the Second Punic War (218-201 B.C.) between Rome and its economic rival Carthage on the Libyan shore. The first Punic War (264-241 B.C.), drummed up by Rome on a Gulf of Tonkin-like pretext, was lost by Hannibal's father Hamilcar, who'd made his nine-year-old son swear an oath to destroy Rome, and now it's Hannibal's (Mature) turn to drive an army of 40,000 men and elephants across the Pyrenees and the Alps to humble Rome. The opening scenes with the army on the move—**Hannibal** was cast with 20,000 extras and artfully filmed elephants (the tagline was "Jump on! Hang on! Here comes the avenging Hannibal and his crazed elephant army!" [the 45 elephants, in truth, often look like circus performers])—are stupendous. Once in Italy, unnerving the static, long-winded Roman Senate, Mature begins to look as weary as Hannibal must have been battling Romans and pillaging the countryside to survive for the next 15 years. Hannibal can never take Rome because he cannot win over Italian tribes as allies and his besieging equipment was lost in the Alps. To spice things up, he becomes smitten with his on-again, off-again captive, Sylvia (Gam), who, ultimately reciprocating, betrays loyalty to her country. Both Mature and Gam speak English; the rest of the cast, including two future spaghetti western icons appearing together for the first time, Hill and Spencer, are dubbed. Trouble is, Sylvia's uncle is



Fabius Maximus (a fairly wooden Ferzetti), the inventor of guerilla warfare, hence known to generations of Latin students by his derisive moniker "Cunctator," The Delayer. Led by more impatient generals, the Romans suffer crushing defeats—the action is occasionally peppy but mostly merely serviceable—first at Lake Trasimene (217 B.C.), more spectacularly at Cannae (216 B.C.), but combat seems rushed and both the run-up and drama compressed. The real action is in Hannibal's camp: run-of-the-mill political intrigues involving elephants to crush Sylvia, sword and sandal-style wrestling matches, a head—Hannibal's brother Hasdrubal—deposited in a sack. **Hannibal**, initially conceived as a character study, wavers, with a leisurely more successful first half and a raggedly paced, run-to-the-finish second. Nobility is out of reach and pathos is engineered, especially in the final scenes when Fabius, who had publicly called for traitors to be buried alive, helps with a stoic Sylvia's suicide.

**Scipio Africanus: The Defeat of Hannibal** picks up the story when a frustrated Hannibal is forced to return to Carthage to save the city from a Roman counter-offensive of North Africa. **Scipio** was funded by Mussolini as a propaganda vehicle to elevate his generalissimo status, conflating it with Rome's savior and a stated goal of reviving a modern Roman Empire. At the close of The Third Punic War (149-146 B.C.), again predicated on a pretext, Carthage was destroyed, its inhabitants killed or enslaved. Consequently, the subtitle is all important, a point not lost on the Italian audience, for Mussolini had already invaded North Africa, in effect starting a Fourth Punic War. Roman fasces, a bundle of wooden rods with an axe blade pointing outward tied together with a red leather ribbon, a sign of Roman magisterial power from time immemorial (fasces adorn governmental insignia worldwide, including, among others, the official seal of the U.S. and the podium area of the House of Repre-



sentatives), are displayed prominently in both films but have more meaning in **Scipio Africanus**: Mussolini called his party Fascists. When he visited the set, thousands of ecstatic legionnaire extras roared "Duce." After filming, many of those 30,000 extras, seen deliriously giving Scipio, a stand-in for Mussolini, the Roman borrowed, bent-arm Nazi salute, were sent to fight in Abyssinia (Ethiopia). Gallone used 1000 horses and 50 elephants to venerate Scipio's (Ninchi) reenactment of Hannibal's defeat at the Battle of Zama (202 B.C.), an extended combat sequence that is both jaw-dropping and horrifying. Elephants are actually being hacked and gored to death by terrified extras, mirroring atrocities occurring in Mussolini's absurdist wars in North Africa. (An unbearable scene shows a spear going through an elephant's eye.) This is a big production, akin to a contemporaneous political rally (Il Duce's **Triumph of the Will**, if you will), with an incongruous, hard-to-follow historical thread murkily looping back and forth to a tragic, highly dramatic love triangle involving the beautiful Queen Sophonisba (Braggiotti) and her two Numidian suitors King Syphace (Giorda) and Captain Massinissa (Giachetti) who, repeatedly switching loyalties from Carthage to Rome, pass her back and forth like a beanbag. Her arresting, silent film-style suicide, a gift she accepts from secret husband and now Roman ally Massinissa (whose cavalry helped effect Hannibal's fall), is, nonetheless, a jarring antidote to the carnage. Extras include production notes. **Scipio the African** (1971, n.i.d.), starring Marcello Mastroianni, recounts Scipio's sad later years when, having flaunted a lavish lifestyle, he is falsely accused of financial crimes and spurned by Rome. Hannibal, on the other hand, is considered one of the greatest generals in history (at Cannae he introduced cavalry flanking maneuvers adopted by Romans and imitated by Napoleon). More than two thousand years after he swore his oath, his heirs saw Rome vanquished. ♂



## GRACE NOTES: FILM COMPOSER JEFF GRACE As Told To Chris Hallock

With a surplus of lavish sounds at his fingertips, versatile composer Jeff Grace has emerged as a preeminent voice in contemporary film scoring. He began auspiciously, balancing work on student films while developing under the tutelage of Howard Shore on epic productions like Peter Jackson's **The Lord of the Rings** trilogy (2001-2003) as well as Martin Scorsese's period drama **Gangs of New York** (2002). In search of solo opportunities, the erstwhile musician cultivated a name for himself working on prominent independent ventures in New York City, most notably with artists at prolific production house Glass Eye Pix.

Grace's electrifying work spans an array of genres and established the moods for the chilling terror of Ti West's **The Roost** (2005) and Larry's Fessenden's **The Last Winter** (2006), Kelly Reichardt's heartfelt western **Meek's Cutoff** (2010), and Jim Mickle's riveting **We Are What We Are** (2013), among many others.

Grace's willingness to subvert convention complements his unencumbered approach, and the multi-instrumentalist has utilized everything from the discordant piano augmenting **The House of the Devil** (2009) and robust string arrangements for the apocalyptic vampire tale **Stake Land** (2010) to the pulsing synthesizer powering **Cold in July** (2014). He is now highly sought by producers, recently branching into television and video games. He's provided the soundscapes for Sundance's hit television series **Hap and Leonard**, as well as Sony's vast multi-storyline game **Hidden Agenda**. Grace spoke with **VideoScope** about the highlights and rigors of film scoring and being positioned to take the mantle of the illustrious maestros of yore.—CH

**CHRIS HALLOCK** Do you come from a musical family?

**JEFF GRACE** Neither of my parents are musicians. I have an older brother who was influential; he was a big fan of music. He had a lot of friends who were musicians, and the music he liked I was exposed to. Growing up, my mom listened to the radio a lot. Both of my grandfathers played piano. When I would go over there—the way my mom tells the story—my brother would go to the piano and just bang keys and walk off. She said I would go by the piano and press a key very gently and then press another key. I'd sit there and actually try to do something. So that's why they started me on piano lessons.

Really, piano was my main instrument. I remember from pretty early on music making a very strong impression on me. I certainly didn't understand anything about how it worked but I remember the mood of a piece of music, whether it was rock music or classical or jazz, I would really hone in on that. That's what really stuck with me and made a big impression on me.

**CH** Can you pinpoint any specific moment where you responded emotionally to music in a film?

**JG** I remember seeing **Star Wars** as a little kid at the theater and being overwhelmed by that. Most of the kids I grew up with had the **Star Wars** soundtrack LP—everybody listened to that. The movie that I remember the most where I was aware of the score was the **Star Wars** movies, **Psycho**—I remember seeing that and being like "oh my god." I don't remember specific scenes but I remember seeing **The Shining** and being completely overwhelmed by that music. All the Indiana Jones stuff, the **Star Wars** stuff...

**CH** When you started getting serious about music, what were some of your earlier career aspirations, assuming you didn't immediately decide on film scoring?

**JG** When I was getting out of high school, I was playing a lot of jazz. I was starting classically and I was getting interested in compositions. I started writing music in sixth grade, just with friends being silly. Definitely by ninth grade, when I got to high school, I started putting more effort into it. I went to Rutgers specifically to study with Kenny Barron, who was a great jazz pianist. They had a very good classical program and I studied composition there. Academically, too, it's a good university. I didn't want to be in New York City right away but I wanted to be close by. I started doing compositions more and more. As I was finishing up there, I started thinking, "Oh, I have to actually get a job someday." I met a guy—a family friend of his owned a music house in the city. They did jingles and stuff for television. He also wrote a lot of contemporary ballet scores. I think probably about a year after meeting that guy, they had an opening there, so I started working for him and moved to the city. At the same time, I started doing student films. I put flyers up around NYU and Columbia, the School of Visual Arts, wherever there was a film department. I started scoring student films, short films, and this job doing jingles during the day, which was really great because you would frequently go through the production process from start to finish on a little project. When I moved to the city, I moved in with a bunch of musician friends, so there were musicians in and out of the house. One of the guys that came in—he saw that I was working on a short film with Pro Tools and Finale. We started talking and after a while he said he worked for Howard Shore and needed extra people who know [the software] and asked if I would I be interested in coming up to talk to him. So that's how I ended up going there. That was one film before **The Lord of the Rings**. I ended



up staying there for four years, all through **The Lord of the Rings**, **Gangs of New York**, a Cronenberg film, and a Fincher film.

**CH** How was the transitioning from large-scale production, back to the independent world of film where you came from?

**JG** That whole time [with Howard Shore] I kept scoring student films, just being around New York with an expanding network of musicians. Basically, I would just take any opportunity.

**CH** You kept a foot in both ends of the spectrum?

**JG** Yes. I've always liked short films. I used to go to the IFC, and the Independent Feature Project had monthly get-togethers where filmmakers could show works-in-progress or a short film. I would go there and try to meet filmmakers. I saw interesting things and met a lot of people, then maybe see someone six months or a year later—the people I thought were most interesting and wanted to keep in contact with. One of those guys, he ended up being producer on a film for a classmate of his. The guy was Peter Phok and his classmate was Ti West. That's when I was looking to pack up working at Howard's. I'd been working there for four years on **The Lord of the Rings** and I wanted to go on and do something different. The timing was perfect. They had this little film, **The Roost**, and they were looking for someone to score it. I had a bunch of recordings, but it wasn't exactly what he was looking for. We thought about things, and over the phone he acted out the entire movie in about fifteen minutes—he did all the parts, it was pretty funny! We just talked about different things. They had a very small budget. He wanted some stuff that was like **The Evil Dead**, synth kind of stuff, that was more intense and could deal with action and horrific stuff. I said we should do half electronic and then half centered around a string quartet.

**“One of the reasons I got into working on film and television, first of all, is that I like a ton of different types of music.”**  
**Jeff Grace**

I showed him examples of stuff you could do with a string quartet. I played him some really modern classical music which he loved, and so we ended up doing that. It was a lot of fun. From there, Larry Fessenden produced, so I met Larry and that opened me up to his network of filmmakers. I ended up meeting a lot of people and that was my entry into New York.

*CH The score for Kelly Reichardt's **Meek's Cutoff** doesn't sound like you'd expect a western to sound.*

*JG* That came about because Kelly had tried to musically treat it as a traditional western. The film just kept throwing it back. It did not work because it was so on-the-nose and she really did not want it to be. So, they asked me to take a look at the movie. It occurred to me about a third of the way through that it's definitely a period film, and there's just no way around that. What I thought—and the way she shot and edited the film with these long dissolves and shots of the West—I thought it would be interesting to take instruments available then but do something you wouldn't expect. There's an element of familiarity, but there's also this element of things being turned on their head.

*CH It's interesting to compare that with **Stake Land**, a more straight-up horror film, where you also went against the grain with the soundtrack.*

*JG* With **Stake Land**, it's a road movie about a bunch of people coming together and working for a common cause. The more intimate the film—and Jim [Mickle] pointed out, what actually happens is as the movie goes on, they get further and further away from society. They almost go back in time and also get more intimate as a group. We wanted the score to reflect that. Obviously, there are action scenes, but also small, quiet, intimate moments, and those are where we put in a lot of effort.

*CH When you started out in charge of composing horror pieces, were you worried about being pigeonholed?*

*JG* I was definitely aware of that. For myself, I kept my other musical activities alive at the same time. I was aware people could see me that way and at a certain point it would be difficult to get out of that. I was trying to find dramas that were interesting. A lot of the genre films I've done are in a lot of ways

dramas. **The Last Winter** is a drama and psychological thriller and the same with **Stake Land**.

*CH If you're working on a rushed television series like **Hap and Leonard**, is there some luxury in terms of time to experiment, or do you need to go in with a bag of tricks?*

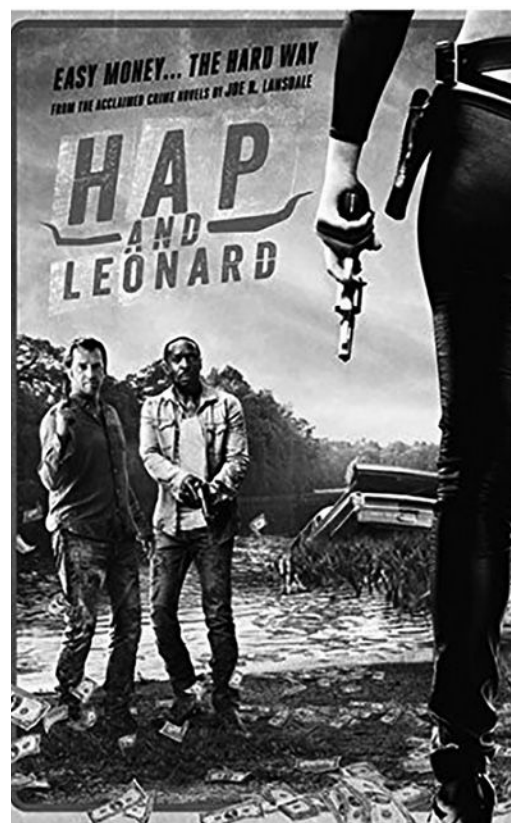
*JG* With television, once the conveyor belt starts up for the season, you've got to do everything to make sure it's delivered on time. What I'll do is go in and write a bunch of pieces for scenes and get an idea of sound palettes. With **Hap and Leonard**, I think I wrote sixteen different demos while they were shooting. One of those ended up being the main theme. The opening title, I had that clean melody first, and did an arrangement me and Jim talked about—we knew it was Texas in the '80s and knew some of it was going to be guitar. We talked about percussion, we talked about stomps and claps—some elements being as organic as possible.

*CH Aside from the time constraints, it must be a composer's dream to work on something like **Hap and Leonard** where the tone jumps around from romantic to comedic to horrific all in one episode. Is it also frustrating working that way?*

*JG* No, I love it. One of the reasons I got into working on film and television, first of all, is that I like a ton of different types of music. I really like a lot of different styles of music, I like a lot of different artists. To just do one thing wasn't interesting to me. I'm creatively stimulated by taking two things that seem completely unrelated—I might see a connection between those two. That will make you make different decisions you wouldn't normally make if you're doing it the normal way. I think the same as with the narrative stuff; I like a lot of different things. The dark and melancholy stuff is easy for me to get to. I found doing the comedic stuff in **Hap and Leonard** was a lot of fun. With a lot of comedy, the more you score it straight, oftentimes the funnier it is. With **Hap and Leonard**, they're so quirky. Joe Lansdale, the world he created with those guys, is so funny.

*CH Is it true that you've recently branched out into video game scoring? Tell me about your experience.*

*JG* Oh yes, I had a game come out in the fall for Sony called **Hidden Agenda**. It's Supermassive, the company that did **Until Dawn**. What's interesting about that is it's kind of like a choose-your-own-adventure movie. It's this murder mystery, serial killer investigation. What was challenging and intriguing about it was—it is very cinematic for a game. It's got this big narrative but there's narrative branching. You've got to make the music so you give players choices in the music and address what's going on in the story, but you can't just straight up score every option in the



game; there are too many permutations. You've got a core set of material, then you have to figure out ways to arrange things and have it set up production-wise for the different permutations of the game. Figuring that out was really interesting. It was great. That's a great company and I really liked working with them a lot.

*CH How do you feel seeing iconic artists like **Goblin**, **Fabio Frizzi**, or even **John Carpenter** now doing sell-out tours? Would you ever want to perform in front of an audience or do an extensive tour like that?*

*JG* I would have to figure out how to be able to do it live. I used to play live a lot, and that's the one thing I miss about doing this. Going into the studio and recording and having the musicians there—that, I absolutely love, for the music to just take flight. Doing that, it's just all of the fun and very little of the stress. The music's already written and you already know it works. You just go play it. That's the most fun. I got invited to a film festival in Europe a couple of years ago and they wanted me to perform, but I couldn't figure out a way to make it work within the confines of what they had to work with. At some point, yes, I would love to do that, just have to figure it out. It would be a blast!

*CH What are some of your upcoming projects?*

*JG* I'm doing a film called **The Artist's Wife** with Bruce Dern and Lena Olin, a drama. Jim Mickle's got his movie coming up called **In the Shadow of the Moon** with Boyd Holbrook. That's going to be very cool! 🍌



## Nancy Naglin's VIDEO VERITE

### BOMBSHELL: THE HEDY LAMARR STORY (2017) ⚡⚡⚡⚡

D: Alexandra Dean. Hedy Lamarr, Fleming Meeks, Mel Brooks, Jeanine Basinger, Robert Osborne. 88 mins. (Kino) 4/18

For Hedy Lamarr (1914-2000)—born Hedwig Maria Kiesler into a wealthy, non-religious Jewish family participating in the rarified world of *Woman of Gold*'s culturally avant-garde Vienna—beauty was both a gift and a curse. In 1990, near the end of life, she was a recluse, her face disfigured by repeat plastic surgeries, when *Forbes* journalist Fleming Meeks interviewed her about a life filled with drama, cyclical dislocations, disappointment, six marriages (the last to her divorce lawyer) and, most surprising of all, her 1942 invention, with composer George Anthiel (he had previously synchronized miniature piano-players with radio signals), of a radio guidance system for torpedoes to prevent the threat of enemy jamming, utilizing “frequency hopping,” the basis for future Bluetooth technology and Wi-Fi. From childhood, Lamarr was interested in tinkering—she designed a streamlined airplane wing for Howard Hughes (she says he was lousy in bed)—but her notorious nude appearance in *Ecstasy* (1933), in which she was “duped” into simulating an orgasm, dogged her career. Hedy tells her life story with humor/cynicism, fatalism and existential optimism in a documentary interspersed with interviews with family members and celebrities against a backdrop of historical footage and film clips. Beloved by a doting father and, perhaps, forever trying to recapture his love, she married the much older and controlling Friedrich Mandi, Mussolini's armament manufacturer, from whom, dressed as a maid, bedecked in her marriage jewels, she escaped, hopping on a bicycle and booking passage to the United States. On the ocean liner she made a point of being recognized by Louis B. Mayer, who renamed her in homage to silent screen beauty Barbara La Marr. Hedy wryly comments on the ups and downs of her busy '40s Hollywood seductress career—*Boom Town* (1940) and *Samson and Delilah* (1949), among others, and her much-satirized role as sexpot Tondelayo in *White Cargo* (1942), the same year she was petitioning the navy to test her spread spectrum technology. Hedy lost all her money producing her own historical epic, *Loves of Three Queens* (1954), got addicted to drugs thanks to Dr. Max (Dr. Feelgood) Jacobson and, because her patent had expired, never received a penny for her vital invention. Nonetheless, you can't not admire this headstrong, sometimes self-sabotaging woman, recognized at last and celebrated with the equally wry commentary of her son Anthony Loder.

### FORBIDDEN FILMS (2014) ⚡⚡⚡⚡

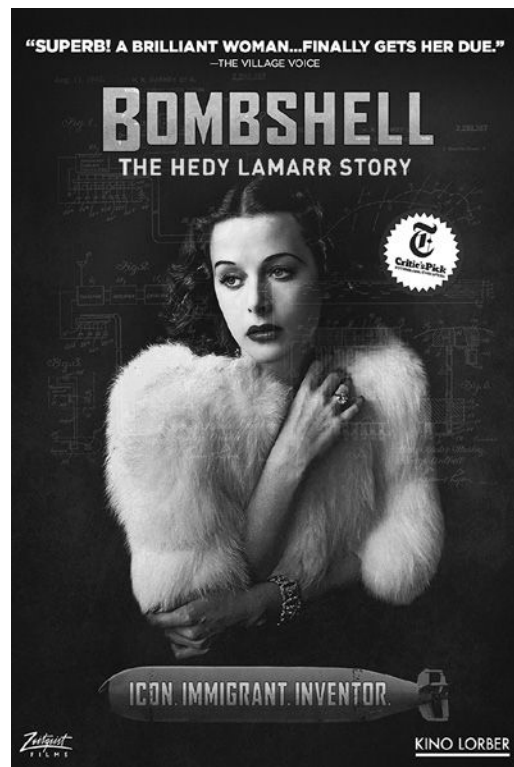
D: Felix Moeller. Hans Albers, Gotz Aly, Elise Aulinger, Stefan Drossler, Walter Franck, Emil Jannings. 94 mins. (Kino Lorber) 5/18

The horrors of the Third Reich have left a legacy of shame, forcing Germans to perpetually confront their embrace of Nazism. Now comes a dissection of the ongoing moral dilemma about how to deal with—to show, edit, or permanently ban (40 films are banned outright)—the propaganda films of the Third Reich's extremely prolific industry. The pariah nitro celluloid films are stored, ironically, in concentration camp-like bunkers to both sequester them and mitigate the effects of possible explosion. According to Joseph Goebbels, Nazi Minister of Propaganda, cinema was the most important medium of propaganda, and this thoughtful, somber film offers riveting snippets of all the genres: anti-British, anti-French, anti-Russian, For the War, For the Party, and anti-Semitic, among many others. Additionally, there's an overview of stars and directors together with analysis of motivation and political awareness, enhanced by the commentary of surviving relatives. Most powerful is the audience feedback from select viewings of “banned films” in Germany and in Israel, paired with discussions with film scholars and archivists debating the unsolvable problem: Do these films, many of them of high quality and true entertainment value, like the infamous *Jew Suss*, when shown today without historical or educational context, succeed again in spreading their ugly message? If you think you're not susceptible, consider the gut-grabbing *Homecoming*, a plea for help from Germans living in contested Danzig, Poland, set upon by German-hating Poles the way the S.S. would annihilate Poles. Then there's the pro-euthanasia *I Accuse*, a still timely story about a doctor fulfilling his multiple sclerosis stricken wife's wish to die, until you learn the film was made to make the German people accept that the state was murdering their deformed, crippled, and mentally ill relatives.

### NAPLES '44 (2016) ⚡⚡⚡⚡

D: Francesco Patierno. Benedict Cumberbatch (voice), Adriano Giannini (voice), archival footage with Alan Arkin, Ernest Borgnine, Keenan Wynn. 80 mins. (First Run Features) 2/18

Author Norman Lewis was not a youthful recruit but already in his thirties, seasoned and skeptical, when, as a World War II British Intelligence officer, he was sent to Occupied Naples, a soul-wrenching experience that reinforced his view that humanity was not making progress. *Naples '44*, based on Lewis' acclaimed 1978 memoir developed from his war diaries, artfully incorporates the author's omniscient voice into a collage of contemporaneous and archival footage showing the city as a place of hopeless depravity. Interspersed are jarring, impressionistic shots



of Naples today to not so subtly contrast the past with the present. The mood is sensual, magical, sad and cynical. The prose soars, capturing, for example, an aspiring writer's pain and joy when, after describing comrades mistakenly mowing down their own and having stepped over their bodies, Lewis discovers a moment of chastened spirituality in the unsullied beauty of ancient ruins. It's shocking to recall how third-world Italy, as well as Hemingway's Spain and other parts of Europe, were up to and immediately after World War II. As the horrors pile up—starvation, smallpox and typhus, mass panic and evacuation of the city driven by the fear that turning the electrical grid back on would trigger detonation of buried German mines, even an eruption of Mt. Vesuvius—*Naples '44* inadvertently validates *La Strada* and the rawness of Italian Neorealism: to survive, one quarter of the female population was involved in prostitution. Soldiers bought sex for a pack of cigarettes. The film, reflecting the subjective world of a writer, is empathetic, ironic and bemused, and makes no effort to connect the citizenry's plight with the consequences of the Italians' love affair with Mussolini's megalomania. It is the quiet voice, one moment dispassionately telling of detainees not forthcoming with info being taken out and shot, the next growing fond, missing already newfound friends among the petty professionals and lawyers perpetually offering their services as informers, happy, with comic courtliness and humor, to turn in their neighbors to make a living, that powerfully peels away the façade of war. Like Robert Stone and Michael Herr chronicling Vietnam and the Iraq war memoirists following them, Lewis knows he's come alive in a cesspool and this kind of hell is the most interesting place he'll never see again. ⚡

# BEST OF THE FESTS: THE OVERLOOK FILM FESTIVAL

By Joseph Perry

The second annual Overlook Film Festival took place at the Bourbon Orleans Hotel in New Orleans, Louisiana, and boasted 23 feature films and 18 shorts from 12 countries. Supernatural horror tales were well represented, as well as films featuring human killers and rabid movie fans.

Prolific Japanese FX makeup artist Soichi Umezawa conjures up an offbeat tale of possessed modeling plasticine for his debut directorial effort **Vampire Clay**. A rural art school teacher (Japanese genre film queen Asuka Kurosawa, late of **The World of Kanako**) discovers a bag of clay coughed up during an earthquake; despite its odd manner of discovery, she gives it to her students to use. The clay becomes sentient at night and when students are alone in the studio, providing plenty of opportunities for Umezawa to show off his skills, which here focus on body horror and include some fun claymation sequences. The sinister clay causes its victims' body parts to twist and distort unnaturally, leading to horrific visual gags galore. The pacing is hit-and-miss and some social themes seem hinted at rather than explored, but overall **Vampire Clay** is an entertaining ride.

Jenn Wexler, producer of such genre film fest faves as director Mickey Keating's **Darling** (2015) and **Psychopaths** (2017), makes her directorial debut with the slasher throwback **The Ranger**. Set in the present day but with a distinct 1980s vibe in both tone and presentation, the story concerns pink-haired Chelsea (Chloe Levine) and her group of punk rocker friends, who escape the city after

her hot-headed boyfriend Garth (Granit Lahu) stabs a police officer during a club raid. They hole up at a cabin in the forest where Chelsea spent summers with her uncle Pete (Larry Fessenden), who died under circumstances made clear later in the film. A park ranger (Jeremy Holm) seemingly helped out young Chelsea after her uncle died, and the two are reunited when the punks act up. Members of the group begin to die savage deaths at the hand of the titular killer, who has a penchant for quoting park violations before dispensing his own brand of off-the-books justice. **The Ranger** tries hard to balance slasher thrills and kills with humor but doesn't quite find the balance. It also makes the mistake of lingering on character development for quite a while before bodies start piling up. That approach works well with sympathetic characters, but everyone in the group other than Chelsea comes off as obnoxious. Levine is terrific as a young woman wrestling with a suppressed past, and Holm plays his villainous role with panache.

Director Ryuhei (Versus) Kitamura's **Downrange** lays on the carnage to the point where his film becomes an exercise in mere sadistic nihilism. Basically a slasher film with a sniper for a villain, the story concerns six twentysomething people riding in a van on a remote stretch of road. When their tire blows out, one of the men discovers that a bullet caused their flat, and he is quickly and gorily dispatched. The survivors run for cover and try to figure out how to survive or escape. That's all that's on offer until a carload of latecomers is introduced seemingly just for shock value and easy sympathy, and a third group is inserted for dark humor and added despair. Don't expect earned tension or well-developed characters. Kitamura instead focuses on various methods of degradation, including corpses being further ravaged by both nature and man.

Director Michael Tully's **Don't Leave Home** is a slow-burn exercise in European gothic chills, with a good deal of Catholicism and Irish mystical and folklore elements. American artist Melanie Thomas (Anna Margaret Hollyman) is preparing an exhibition based on mysterious disappearances in Ireland when a critic writes a scathing review before the opening. Word of this travels across the pond to former priest Alistair Burke (Lalor Roddy), who was involved in one of the disappearances but cleared by authorities. A woman named Shelly (Helena Bereen) calls Melanie and invites her to travel to Ireland to meet Burke. Once Melanie arrives, incidents ranging from odd to otherworldly occur. **Don't Leave Home** plays for spiritual unease, which may keep some viewers at a distance. It has its haunting moments, though, and is worth a look for those interested in an artistic, well-directed psychological thriller with solid performances.

The Brazilian/French co-production **Good Manners** is one of the more thought-provoking genre films viewers are likely to see this year. Social issues meet werewolf legends in this dark fantasy tale from co-writers and co-directors Juliana



Rojas and Marco Dutra. Pregnant Ana (Marjorie Estiano), shunned by her well-to-do family, hires Clara (Isabel Zuaa) as a nanny. Clara is at first put off because Ana has her performing household chores rather than her expected duties, but the two go on to form an intimate bond and ultimately become lovers. When Ana gives traumatic birth to a baby that is something other than human, Clara must take on a role for which she is unprepared. **Good Manners** offers touches of classic Hollywood, including moody lighting and musical numbers, and though the tonal shifts may seem disjointed, the film works well overall, although it feels long at 135-minutes. The filmmakers examine class differences, sexual and familial relationships, and other topics while delivering a solid horror story.

Overlook's Audience Award went to **Wolfman's Got Nards: A Documentary**, helmer Andre Gower's valentine to director Fred Dekker's 1987 creature-feature comedy **The Monster Squad**, which was itself a love letter to the classic Universal horror films of the 1930s and 1940s. Gower, who played group leader Sean in **The Monster Squad**, examines the phenomenon of how this initial box-office underperformer quietly became a cult fave with its frequent cable TV airings and how cast and crew were flabbergasted when the success of a one-off big-screen reunion turned into a 30th anniversary tour throughout the United States and England. The documentary also looks at the difficulties of getting **The Monster Squad** made, the creative talent behind it, including the top-notch practical effects and makeup work, and the influence it has had on multigenerational fandom.

Other feature film award winners were director Joko Anwar's Indonesian **Phantasm** reimagining **Satan's Slaves** for Feature Film Jury Prize and Verena Paravel and Lucien Castaing-Taylor's documentary **Caniba**, about a Japanese cannibal, for Scariest Feature. ⚡





**Rob Freese's  
BEST OF THE  
SPAGHETTI WEST**

**WARNER ARCHIVE**  
(\$17.99 DVD each)

**THE FIVE MAN ARMY** (1969) ♂♂♂  
D: Don Taylor. Peter Graves, James Daly,  
Bud Spencer, Nino Castelnuovo, Tetsuro  
Tanba, Daniela Giordano. 105 mins.

The Dutchman (Graves) calls upon cohorts from his past for an elaborate train heist. Luis (Castelnuovo), an acrobat, brings the men to the Dutchman. They include explosives expert Augustus (Daly), knife artist Samurai (Tanba) and the perpetually hungry musclemesito Mesito (Spencer). After saving a man important to the Mexican Revolution, the team sets out to steal a half million dollars in gold to help support the cause. Somewhere along the way, the men forget they are hired hands and readily assume the Dutchman is joking about handing the fortune over, but all that gets sorted out in the sentimental climax. For the most part, this is a rollicking adventure as the five go through the paces of their journey together and become reluctant heroes. The train robbery is one of the most straight-up fun and inventive heists I've seen yet, with nonstop action from start to finish. There is a good amount of humor sprinkled throughout but it never intrudes on the action. The cast is completely likable, except maybe Castelnuovo as the young hothead in the group, but the characters play off one another well. Director Taylor began his career as an actor and appears briefly as a poker player here, his last on-screen appearance before resuming a successful directing career that included films like **Escape from the Planet of the Apes**, **Damien: Omen 2** and **The Final Countdown**. There is some mystery re who actually completed this flick. Some sources say Taylor quit early and producer Italo Zigarrelli took over, while others claim co-writer Dario Argento may have finished the production before embarking on his directorial debut, **The Bird with the Crystal Plumage**. The Warner Archive box provides two versions of the title; it's listed as **The 5-Man Army!** on the front cover and **The Five Man Army** on the spine and back. The disc includes the original trailer. Whoever directed what, by whatever title you want to call it, **The Five Man Army** reps a satisfying, rousing good time.

**RINGO AND HIS GOLDEN PISTOL**  
(1966) ♂♂♂1/2

D: Sergio Corbucci. Mark Damon, Valeria Fabrizi, Vranco Derosa, Andrea Aureli, Loris Loddi, Pippo Starnazza, Ettore Manni. 88 mins.

ARCHIVE  COLLECTION



Johnny Ringo/Oro (Damon) is a devil-may-care bounty hunter who goes after any man with a price on his head. He melted down a good bit of gold to fashion the golden pistola he uses to gun down his bounties. Arriving in town during the eldest Perez brother's wedding, Ringo shoots three wanted Perez brothers and spares the life of the youngest, Juanito (Derosa), because there is no warrant for his capture. Enraged, Juanito hires some professional gunslinging types and swears revenge on Ringo. Ringo has little time to worry about Juanito as he is busy collecting more gold and tomcatting around the saloon, using insults to court the ladies. Sheriff Bill Norton (Manni) has to lock Ringo up for his reckless use of explosives when dealing with the men Juanito sends to kill him. This is a top-rate shoot-em-up that entertains from start to finish and even features a mariachi with a deadly guitar. It took me a bit to warm up to Damon as Ringo (I'm a huge fan of Giuliano Gemma's "angel-face" Ringo in **A Pistol for Ringo** and **The Return of Ringo**), but once I did I was totally into the character and the movie. There's some corny humor along the way but Damon sells it and makes it kind of cool. Corbucci delivers a fun but tough flick that is not as hard-edged as his earlier **Django** but shows a slightly lighter side of the filmmaker. (After an impressive run in the western genre, Corbucci spent his later years directing successful comedies for the Italian market.) The original theatrical trailer supplies the disc's lone bonus. Spaghetti westerns fans will enjoy immensely. ♂

*The Phantom's*  
**BEST OF THE WEST**

**KINO LORBER FILMS**

(\$24.95 Blu-ray) 4/18

**SINGING GUNS** (1950) ♂♂♂

D: R.G. Springsteen. Vaughn Monroe, Ella Raines, Walter Brennan, Ward Bond, Barry Kelley, Jeff Corey. 91 mins.

Kino unearths a reel curio for sagebrush buffs with **Singing Guns**. When popular baritone crooner Vaughn Monroe, who'd already dipped into the popular singing-cowboy well (following the likes of Gene Autry and Frankie Laine) with major western-flavored hits like "Mule Train" (which he renders here) and "Ghost Riders in the Sky," one might have expected a light-weight Roy Rogers-style oater, especially with that **Blazing Saddles**-type title. Instead, Monroe steps into a flinty frontier adventure that seems tailor-made for gritty contemporaneous Republic Pictures star Wild Bill Elliott—it even features Wild Bill's **The Showdown** (1950) costar Walter Brennan and a naturalistic script by the latter film's screenwriter Stuart McGowan. Monroe impresses as Rhiannon, a vengeful bearded outlaw whose bigtime gripe against a crooked mining company has already led him to horde a million bucks worth of stolen gold. After reluctantly shooting sheriff Jim Caradac (Bond) during a fracas, the masked brigand brings the seriously wounded lawman to local doc Jonathan Mark (Brennan), who transfuses Rhiannon's blood to save the sheriff's life. While the plum-tuckered outlaw sleeps, Doc takes the liberty of shaving his beard, inadvertently hiding his identity. As plot twists would have it, our warbling antihero temporarily fills in for the recovering lawman, a task to which Rhiannon soon takes a liking, just as he takes a similar shine to attractive, tough and independent-minded saloon gal (and Sheriff Caradac's squeeze) Nan Morgan (Raines). Torn between his old thieving ways and a fresh chance to nail his mining combine enemies, Rhiannon rides a thin legal line the rest of the way. Adapted from a novel by reliable Old West writer Max Brand and directed by Republic action ace Springsteen, **Singing Guns** emulates the best of Bill Elliot's films, wedding a B-western sensibility with slicker production values, all brought to you in the magic of glorious Tru-color. Look for future **Father Knows Best** siblings Elinor Donohue and Billy Gray as unrelated town tykes. Extras include an audio commentary by film historian Toby Roan, along with bonus Kino trailers. ♂

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## Nancy Naglin's ART-HOUSE VIDEO

### THE GATHERING STORM (2002)

⌘⌘⌘⌘

D: Richard Loncraine. Albert Finney, Vanessa Redgrave, Jim Broadbent, Linus Roache, Lena Headey, Derek Jacobi, Tom Hiddleston. 96 mins. (HBO) 9/09

### THE DARKEST HOUR (2017)⌘⌘⌘⌘1/2

D: Joe Wright. Gary Oldman, Kristin Scott Thomas, Ben Mendelsohn, Lily James, Ronald Pickup, Stephen Dillane, Samuel West, David Strathairn. (Universal Studios) 2/18

### CHURCHILL (2017)⌘⌘

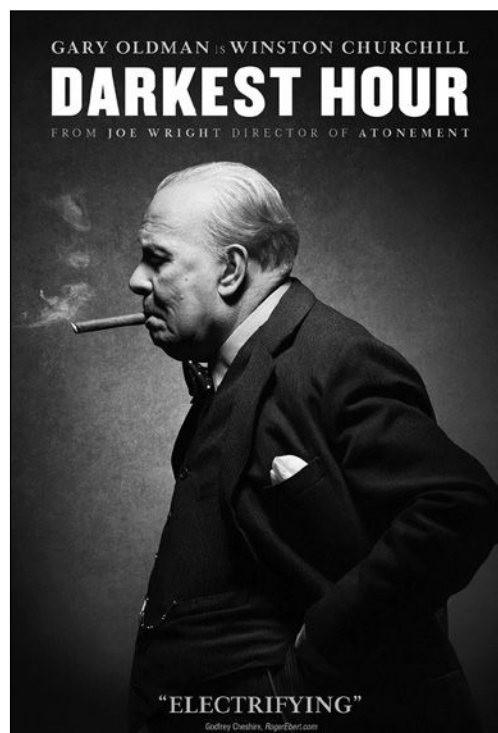
D: Jonathan Teplitzky. Brian Cox, Miranda Richardson, John Slattery, Julian Wadham, Richard Durden, Ella Purnell, James Purefoy. (Cohen Media) 9/17

These three historical biopics wax poignant, eloquent and dramatic dissecting the personal life of the magnificently idiosyncratic and singularly self-assured Winston Churchill (1874-1965) as he battles with political rivals, the failures of his past (Churchill, as First Lord of the Admiralty, was held responsible for the debacle at Gallipoli during World War I), the mission to save Britain in the run-up to war, naysayers and his own demons in the fateful year of 1940, and, later, with Allied generals amid indecisions leading to the 1944 Normandy invasion. They are exquisitely detailed period pieces replete with history, intrigue and infighting, especially familial, and, not surprisingly, offer roles of a lifetime. You can turn on TV almost anytime and see veteran Shakespearean actor Finney (he rejected the role of **Lawrence of Arabia** to play **Tom Jones**) as the underdog lawyer in **Erin Brockovich** (a slimmer Finney turned in a masterful performance as a bank robber in the less well-known 1981 caper gem **Loophole** [VS #102]), but as the between-wars, has-been Churchill, struggling to get back on top and pay bills, Finney doesn't merely portray Churchill as much as animate a legend. Made for HBO cable, **The Gathering Storm** (the title is taken from Churchill's memoir) shows a woefully unprepared Britain dithering. Churchill, supporting his extravagant lifestyle solely by writing, is compelled to set aside his biography of his ancestor John Churchill, The Duke of Marlborough [1650-1722] (Churchill's hero because the Duke's victory in The War of The Spanish Succession, an early version of World War I, made Britain the leading European power) to agitate, plot, orate and force long-suffering wife Clemmie (Redgrave) to realize they're broke. Parliamentary intrigues are compelling.

Churchill's home life is chaotic—a daughter getting divorced, seething resentments—but the suspense spins on Churchill enlisting soon-to-be-suicide government official Ralph Wigram (Roache) to steal classified documents revealing the truth about German rearmament. A less successful TV sequel, **Into the Storm** (2004), starring Brendan (Braveheart) Gleeson, highlights the events of the war years told in choppy flashbacks as a forlorn Churchill—the war has now ended and irrelevance is looming—moodily walks the beaches in France waiting to learn he's been voted out of office.

A plumped-up Gary (**The Dark Knight**) Oldman, unrecognizable from his **True Romance** Chinese food-eating pimp days, leads Churchill into his wartime bunker to strut, shout and impose his iron will on political allies, enemies and countrymen. His is an acclaimed and studied performance capturing diction and mannerisms, but in the war of the Churchills Finney wins. **The Darkest Hour** is a beautifully shot film with the cinematography radiating the gravity of history as when, for example, the camera follows Churchill down long corridors to meet a very skeptical King George VI (Mendelsohn). May, 1940: Germany is on the verge of controlling Europe; Britain's situation, explained day by day, is increasingly grim. Labour forces Neville Chamberlain (Pickup) to resign, Viscount Halifax (Dillane) could be his successor, while Churchill is a fallback unity PM with little support. It's an uphill but very enjoyable struggle to watch Churchill win over the marvelously stuttering and chain-smoking king, ward off pressures to negotiate with Hitler, and persuade the country to never surrender. Meanwhile, the entire British military is about to be annihilated at Dunkirk. The pleasure is watching Churchill be both lion and kitten, intrepid but nearly always insufferable, riddled with ambition and, in private, doubt. A scene of complete made-up nonsense undermines the heart of what is an otherwise superlative film. The aristocratic Churchill, who prides himself on never having been on a subway train, descends into the Underground to test the mettle of the ordinary classes. The painfully extended scene is cringe-worthy, a social media intervention brimming with reality-TV emotions that pointedly showcases the racial diversity of the population and turns regular folks into fools. Extras include a director's commentary and two behind-the-scenes featurettes.

In **Churchill**, Brian (**The Bourne Identity**) Cox (the first to play Hannibal Lecter, in **Manhunter** [1986]) has the unhappy task of showing a diminished and factually inaccurate Churchill dangerously out of touch near war's end, humored by everyone, especially his aide, fellow Boer War vet Jan Smuts (Durden), fighting bombastically with his generals and, endlessly haunted by his World War I failure (he sees blood everywhere), vehemently opposing the D-Day invasion. (Churchill had cause for worry: the innovative amphibian landing at Gallipoli was



the model for D-Day.) **Churchill** is a tedious, one-note argument between a drunk Churchill overwhelmed by his famous "Black Dog" depression and caricatured portrayals of Eisenhower (Slattery) and Montgomery (Wadham). However, all the films, enhanced with large casts and meticulous period research, capture the sweep of history. While Churchill wanders the halls of Parliament or makes scenes at home breaking dishes, examine the furnishings, the gardens, cars and decanters. **The Darkest Hour**, in particular, imbues the period with a seamless feel of authenticity and is excellent at pairing scenes of intimacy—Chamberlain and Halifax in cahoots—with the drama of Churchill flying secretly to France. Uncredited is historian William Manchester's incomparable two-volume Churchill biography, **The Last Lion** (wherein he makes the claim that Churchill's values—he was a Victorian at heart who, in the Boer War (1899-1902), participated in England's last cavalry charge—and prose saved England), a source for all things Churchillian that inform all these films and make them so enjoyable: Churchill's helplessness without a valet, his penchant for the bath (Manchester has Churchill telling Clemmie why he must have exorbitantly priced silk underwear: "I have a very delicate cuticle") and habit of walking about naked afterward, his writing routine requiring a regularly browbeaten and subjugated girl secretary who appears in all three films, likewise his near-totemic reliance on the "klop," a hole-punching gadget holding together the pages of his speeches, the grandiose, self-pitying fits of pique, Clemmie's devotion and exasperation, and, in **The Darkest Hour**, Churchill's fanatical obsession with constructing his beloved home Chartwell (he is shown laying brick), now one of England's top tourist attractions, more popular than the Duke of Marlborough's ancestral estate Blenheim. ⌘



## The Phantom's NOIR GANG

KINO LORBER FILMS

(\$29.95 Blu-ray) 3/18

HIGHWAY DRAGNET (1954)B&W

888

D: Nathan Juran. Richard Conte, Joan Bennett, Wanda Hendrix, Reed Hadley, Mary Beth Hughes, Iris Adrian. 70 mins.

An interesting blend of the good, the bad, and the Corman (a novice Roger receives co-story credit here), **Highway Dragnet** unites two noir icons, Richard (*Cry of the City*) Conte, as ex-serviceman Jim Henry, and Joan (*Scarlet Street*) Bennett, as fashion photographer Mrs. Cummings, in a road movie mixing mystery, murder and high-speed chases. Following a classic barroom pickup scene that sees a rude, surly Jim reject B girl Terry Smith's (an excellent Hughes) advances, our hostile hero is quickly collared by Nevada police headed by apparently part Native American detective Joe White Eagle (Hadley) and charged with Smith's subsequent killing. After escaping custody, a hitch-hiking Jim hooks up with the somewhat haughty Mrs. Cummings and her earthy young model Susan Willis (Hendrix) for a series of breakdowns, conflicts, and near captures. **Highway Dragnet**—the title alone covers all bets, combining two popular contemporaneous crime series, **Highway Patrol** and **Dragnet**, further sweetened by the casting of **Racket Squad** TV star Hadley—gradually reveals a clever central twist that adds another layer of tension to the trim proceedings. Evocative locations, from hot dusty desert byways to a climax set in a decaying Salton Sea settlement, add further flavor. Unfortunately, the action is partially undone by an overreliance on coincidence and a grizzled Jim and perky young Susan's highly unlikely romantic entanglement. Still, this swiftly paced, nicely restored road caper should please fans of both B noirs and the veteran leads. Extras include a trailer gallery.

WARNER ARCHIVE

DANGER SIGNAL (1945)B&W888

D: Robert Florey. Faye Emerson, Zachary Scott, Dick Erdman, Rosemary DeCamp, Bruce Bennett, Mona Freeman, John Ridgely. 79 mins. (\$17.99 DVD) 3/18

Following a chilling prologue that prefigures **The Stepfather** by some four decades, **Danger Signal** tracks the sociopathic progress of a literal ladykiller (go-to screen cad Scott) as he flees the scene of an unsolved murder to assume a new identity as part-time writer Ronnie Mason in a California coastal town. There, he sets his avaricious, homicidal sights on young stenographer Hilda

(Emerson)—in line to receive a sizable inheritance—when he takes a room at the boardinghouse where she resides. Their subsequent romance, which includes a day at the beach (a locale seemingly de rigueur in West Coast crime films), hits a calculated snag when the lethal lothario turns his attention to Hilda's younger sis Anne (Freeman), who dumps her dopey would-be beau Bunkie Taylor (Erdman) to dally with the devilishly handsome stranger. While these innocents constitute easy pickings, Ronnie ultimately encounters a formidable foe in suspicious psychiatrist Dr. Jane Silla (a strong DeCamp, sporting a subdued European accent). French emigre Florey, of **The Beast with Five Fingers** and **The Crooked Way** fame, directs at a brisk, confident clip as our tale leads to Ronnie's anticipated karmic comeuppance, elevating an intended disposable second feature to near classic status. In the end, we subtracted a half Ro-Man for the film's rather abrupt conclusion, followed by a completely unnecessary, discordantly sappy coda. Still, **Danger Signal** rates as a sharp surprise noir hounds won't want to miss.

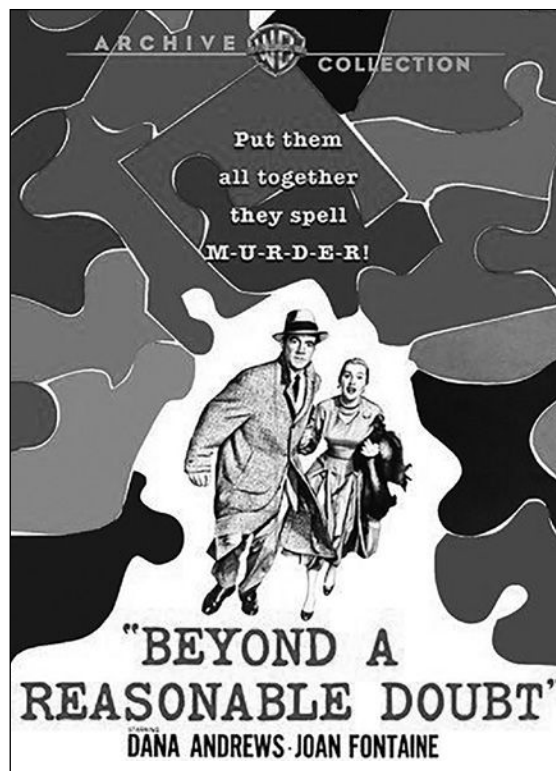
FRITZ HITS

BEYOND A REASONABLE DOUBT (1956)

B&W8888

D: Fritz Lang. Dana Andrews, Joan Fontaine, Sidney Blackmer, Arthur Franz, Philip Bourneuf, Edward Binns, Barbara Nichols. 80 mins. (\$21.99 Blu-ray each) 3/18

Noir stalwart Andrews plays Tom Garrett, a writer who agrees to take a murder rap in a bid to expose judicial dysfunction in Lang's knockout noir. Boasting a central hook that can take its rightful place beside Rudolph Mate's **D.O.A.** and Clouzot's **Diabolique**, the tricky plot is set in motion when the discovery of a deceased stripper's body attracts Tom's attention, prompting him to pitch his potentially risky plan to newspaper publisher Austin Spencer (future **Rosemary's Baby** Satanist Blackmer), father of Tom's understandably concerned fiancée Susan (Fontaine). To arouse initial suspicion, Tom descends into a burlesque demimonde where he dates ecadysiast Dolly Moore (a terrific Nichols) in a bid to implicate himself in the case and, with Spencer's help, methodically arranges a trail of damning circumstantial evidence that leads to Tom's arrest and trial for the homicide. A clever twist tosses a major monkey wrench into his scheme, considerably upping the suspense ante. Lang's final American film, drawn from Douglas Morrow's taut script, rates as one of the emigre auteur's best, an 80-minute rollercoaster ride that never lets up and concludes with a climactic gut punch. The property was remade in 2009, with Jesse Metcalfe in the writer's role and featuring Michael Douglas and Amber Tamblyn.



WHILE THE CITY SLEEPS (1956)B&W

888

D: Fritz Lang. Dana Andrews, Rhonda Fleming, George Sanders, Howard Duff, Thomas Mitchell, Vincent Price, Ida Lupino. 100 mins.

Lang's other 1956 noir (not to be confused with John H. Auer's **City That Never Sleeps** [1953]) likewise headlines Andrews (hard to believe now that Dana received top billing over such iconic thespas as Sanders, Price and Lupino), this time as a newsman determined to crack the case of the Lipstick Killer (John Barrymore Jr.), an Oedipal wreck preying on unsuspecting women. While Barrymore's psychotic mama's boy reps a novel character for the time (appearing four years ahead of his high-profile counterpart Norman Bates), the focus quickly shifts from his creepy reign of terror to less galvanizing internecine infighting at a major news conglomerate, where a caustic Sanders, old-school Mitchell and cynical Lupino compete to win a major promotion from capricious company scion Price. Lang lends his expected artistry to the intrigues, with an invaluable assist from cinematographer Ernest Laszlo, but, unlike **Beyond a Reasonable Doubt**, **City** seems something of a lost opportunity to bring a harder-hitting narrative to the screen. 8

NOIR NEWS IS GOOD NEWS

Elsewhere on the noir front, scope out the over-the-top 1948 British ersatz Yank gangster romp **No Orchids for Miss Blandish** (Kino Lorber), drawn from James Hadley's novel, and Robert Wise's blistering, racially charged 1959 caper classic **Odds Against Tomorrow** (Olive Films), starring Harry Belafonte, Robert Ryan, Ed Begley and Shelley Winters.

## *The Phantom's* **I WAKE UP STREAMING! NOIR NUGGETS FROM THE 'NET**

### **PUSHOVER** (1954)B&W☹☹☹

D: Richard Quine. Fred MacMurray, Kim Novak, Dorothy Malone, Philip Carey, E.G. Marshall, Paul Richards. 88 mins.

Joining Lee J. Cobb (*The Man Who Cheated Himself*), Van Heflin (*The Prowler*) and Edmond O'Brien (*Shield for Murder*), among many others, former **Double Indemnity** co-conspirator Fred MacMurray goes the good cop gone bad route in this down-and-dirty entry. Honest but easily tempted (by dames and dough alike) detective Paul Sheridan is assigned to a stakeout to investigate Lona McLane (a stunning Novak in her screen debut), sultry moll of missing bank robber/murderer Harry Wheeler (Richards). Paul contrives an "accidental" meeting outside a movie theater (where onscreen partner Carey's contemporaneous western *The Nebraskan* happens to be showing), then helps Lona with her recalcitrant car. (Paul: "Let's take a look under the hood. I don't think you're getting any spark." Lona: "I'm not. Any suggestions?") Soon, they're in hot-and-heavy territory at Lona's pad as an amorous Paul continues to play the unsuspecting accomplice to score the low-down re Wheeler's whereabouts. When Lona learns that Paul's a copper, the game reverses, the cat becomes the mouse, and the two ultimately conspire to run off with Wheeler's hidden dough. Naturally, events snowball from there, leading Paul down a one-way path to perdition. A subplot involves stakeout partner Rick McAllister (Carey), who tumbles for Lona's next-door neighbor Anne Stewart (Malone), a Nightingale-style nurse who increasingly figures in the plot. Photographed by Lee White, **Pushover** presents a striking L.A. nocturne that's even more seductive than the not wholly original story. Novak supplies further eye candy, while the ever-dependable Marshall lends authority to his role as Paul's disappointed superior. Withal, a textbook noir that leaves few, if any, tropes unturned.

### **SHED NO TEARS** (1948)B&W☹☹☹

D: Jean Yarbrough. Wallace Ford, June Vincent, Robert Scott, Dick Hogan, Frank Albertson, Johnstone White. 70 mins.

Few noble human specimens are on view in this low-budget, occasionally shaky but admirably unsentimental noir about a rather shrewish "femme fatale" who conspires with

her hubby to collect on his insurance policy while he's still standing. After faking his death in an apartment fire and tossing a burning morgue-bought corpse out the window, Sam Grover (Ford) splits for D.C. while wife Edna hastens to the waiting arms of her actual intended co-beneficiary, secret beau Ray Belden (Scott). While merry widow Edna two-times Sam, investigators led by Lt. Hutton (Albertson) check on the case. Meantime, the missing Sam's suspicious son Tom (Hogan) hires sleazy, self-styled sophisticate shamus Huntington Stewart (White) to shove his crooked shnozz into the matter, where he tries to sniff out a piece of the action. A noir where there's virtually no one to pull for, save for the aggrieved son (rather blandly interpreted by Hogan), **Shed No Tears** fully lives up to its cynical title. A bit tighter scripting, zippier direction and a slightly improved cast (with the exception of an excellent Ford) might have moved the film a major notch up the noir scale. As it is, **Shed No Tears** definitely rates a dry-eyed look. The best line belongs to Ford. While on a train, he studies a wallet photo of wife Edna, prompting the nosy old lady passenger seated beside him to comment: "What a lovely creature—is that your daughter?" To which Ford sarcastically replies, "No, my granddaughter." Note also a defenestration moment featuring cabbie and cop witnesses that's pretty baldly borrowed from Henry Hathaway's *The Dark Corner* (1946).

### **UNDERTOW** (1949)B&W☹☹☹

D: William Castle. Scott Brady, John Russell, Dorothy Hart, Peggy Dow, Bruce Bennett, Dan Farniel. 71 mins.

A frequent toiler in the mystery movie mines, including entries in *The Whistler* and *Crime Doctor* series, before making his bones as a horror gimmick guru, Castle goes the hardcore noir route with the generically titled (and somewhat generically plotted) **Undertow**. Lawrence Tierney's less-bad brother Scott Brady toplines as Tony Reagan, an ex-serviceman looking to open a High Sierras sporting lodge with his accumulated back pay. While flying to Chicago to retrieve his fiancée Sally (Hart), Tony meets schoolteacher Ann (Dow), an appealing, warm-hearted lass who clearly tumbles for the lug. Tunnel-visioned Tony only has eyes for Sally, though, and plans to ask her hostile big-shot uncle Big Jim Lee for his approval. When Big Jim is promptly knocked off, Tony's framed for the crime and forced to take it on the lam in the big city, even while bleeding from a gunshot wound. That's when the oft-predictable twists and turns kick in as Tony, with the help of Ann and cop friend Charles (Bennett), seeks to survive and clear his name. While the storyline is less than startling, Castle compensates with steady pacing, a large cast of well-sketched characters and, most of all, a sharp eye for atmospheric locations, from a lakeside boardwalk to an interior maze that becomes a visual metaphor for the plot machinations. Brady, Bennett and Dow are likable as the impromptu team, while Russell scores as Tony's untrustworthy connection.



### **NOIR FLASHBACK**

#### **THE LINEUP** (1958)B&W☹☹☹1/2

D: Don Siegel. Eli Wallach, Robert Keith, Mary LaRoche, Emile Meyer, Warner Anderson, Richard Jaeckel, Vaughn Taylor. 86 mins. (Fox)

Crime-movie maestro (and later Clint Eastwood mentor) Siegel, who helmed the premiere episode of the long-running San Francisco-set tele-series of the same name, returned to take charge of this super hard-edged celluloid spinoff. While the film opens like many TV episodes, with detectives Anderson, Meyer and others investigating a case involving innocent tourists being used as unwitting drug couriers by a particularly vicious syndicate, the story's wisely turned over to complex psycho Dancer (a frighteningly brilliant Wallach) and his possibly homosexual life (and death) coach Julian (Keith) as soon as they appear on the scene. Their mission: To recover a missing stash of heroin and eliminate its carrier and any witnesses along the way. To say that Dancer enjoys his work would be a gross understatement, just as Julian loves orchestrating each hit and recording the victim's last words in his little black book. **The Lineup** contains several surprisingly brutal scenes for its day: a close-up killing in a steam bath, an intense struggle between Dancer and a little girl (Cheryl Callaway), and Dancer's extermination of their mysterious wheelchair-bound boss "The Man" (Taylor), a sequence that goes a cackling Richard Widmark's similarly lethal act in *Kiss of Death* at least one better. The pic concludes with a breathless **Bullitt** car chase through the streets of San Francisco, courtesy of the killers' daredevil driver Sandy (Jaeckel). Siegel and scripter Stirling Silliphant pack much extreme sociopathic action into a trim 86-minute runtime. ☹



## The Phantom's VAN DAMME REPORT

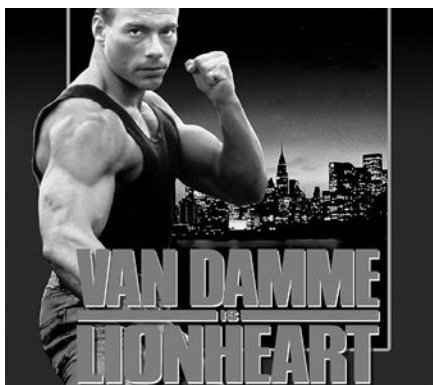
### MVD REWIND COLLECTION

(\$39.95 2-disc Blu-ray + DVD) 6/18

**LIONHEART** (1991) 88/1/2

D: Sheldon Lettich. Jean-Claude Van Damme, Deborah Rennard, Harrison Page, Lisa Pelikan, Ashley Johnson, Brian Thompson. 104 mins./110 mins.

Earlier titled both **A.W.O.L.** and **Wrong Bet**, **Lionheart** opens with our hero (who also receives a story credit), cast as Lyon, a soldier who deserts the French Foreign Legion to avenge the Stateside death of his drug-dealing brother. J-C arrives penniless in cold, cruel NYC but is soon rescued by street-fight promoter Joshua (Page, perhaps best remembered as the black militant in Russ Meyer's **Vixen!**) who steers him to ruthless blond martial-arts mogul Cynthia (Rennard) and her hulking bodyguard Russell (Thompson). J-C next journeys to warm, cruel L.A., where he participates in gladiatorial free-for-alls for the amusement of degenerate high-rollers while secretly turning his earnings over to his brother's widow Helene (Pelikan) and five-year-old daughter Nicole (Johnson), who supplies the pic with a marginal Kindergarten Kickboxer angle. J-C shows he's learned how to cry on cue and apparently taught the same tearful trick to the rest of the cast, resulting in more on-screen bawling seen in any actioner since **Cage**, when Reb Brown and Lou Ferrigno let the ocular moisture flow. The kickboxing choreography is first-rate, especially during J-C's climactic bout with an impressive kung-fu killer named Atila (Abdel Qissi), who's fond of literally breaking his opponents in half. MVD's Rewind Collection edition kicks in both the Original Theatrical Version and Extended Cut, the new making-of documentary **Lionheart: The Inside Story** featuring interviews with Van Damme, director Lettich, actor Page and more, the featurettes **Inside Lionheart with the Filmmakers and Cast** and **Lionheart: Behind the Fights**, an archival Lettich and Page track, interviews and featurettes, TV spots, photo gallery, trailer and collectible mini-posters. 8



## The Phantom's JOY OF SETS

### FILM FINDS

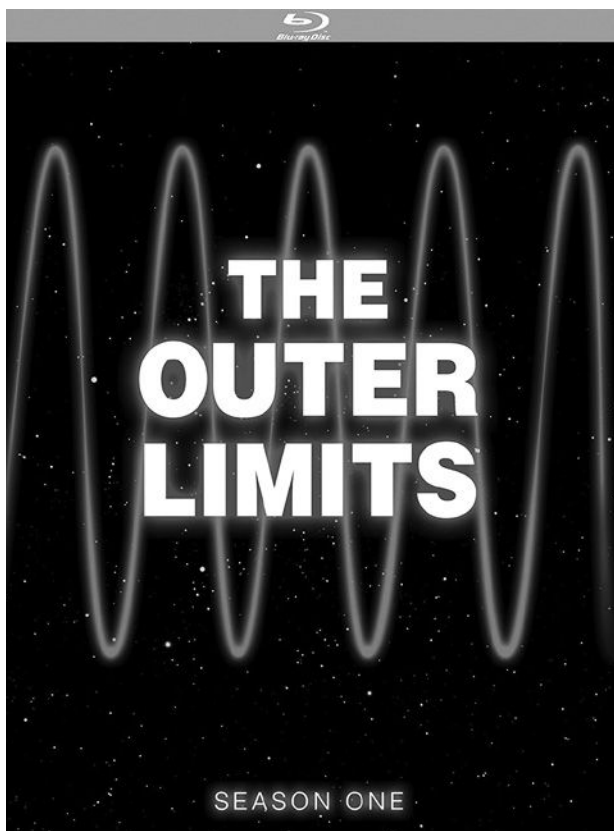
Before he became horrorland's gimmick guru and master of suspense, William Castle labored long as a contract director for producer Sam (Jungle Sam) Katzman at Monogram and, later, Columbia Pictures. Mill Creek Entertainment assembles an eight-pack of those early WC works with **The William Castle Western Collection: The Fastest Guns of the West** (2-disc DVD \$19.98). The set kicks off with the fun 1943 black-and-white B western **Klondike Kate**, repping a pre-**Detour** pairing of Tom Neal and Ann Savage, seen here in a far less toxic relationship, and packing the proceedings with a slew of bouncy original saloon tunes. The action segues to several color 1950s adventures highlighted by **Masterson of Kansas** (1954), a typically fictionalized but lively Dodge City account starring a strapping if small-voiced George Montgomery and easily stolen by underrated shifty character thesp James Griffith's portrayal of Doc Holiday as a smooth, supremely sicko sociopath. Two Indian-conflict capers, Robert Stack in **Conquest of Cochise** (1953) and Montgomery again in **Battle of Rogue River** (1954) supply their fair share of old-school action, as does the change-of-pace 1825 New Orleans-set **Duel on the Mississippi**, with Lex Barker and Patricia Medina. The manic **Jesse James vs. The Daltons** (1954), lensed in 3-D, hurls all manner of actors and objects at the camera and features a couple of surprisingly brutal moments. **The Gun That Won the West** (1955) and the oddball contemporary non-western **Uranium Boom** (1956), both starring Dennis Morgan, complete the essential octet.

In other oater news, Film Movement Classics issues a deluxe 50th Anniversary Restoration edition of a spaghetti western giant, the snow-bound and ultimately ultra-bleak **The Great Silence** (\$39.95 Blu-ray), a major inspiration for Quentin Tarantino's equally icy **The Hateful Eight** (VS #99). Jean-Louis Trintignant stars as Silence, a mute gunslinger who protects a motley band of wanted men and women from blood-thirsty bounty hunters led by Loco (the ever-flamboyant Klaus Kinski at his cruelest). Extras include an appreciation of **The Great Silence** auteur Sergio Corbucci by filmmaker/fan Alex (Repo Man) Cox, a 1968 documentary **Western, Italian Style**, two alternate endings, original Italian and English-language versions, theatrical trailer and **Ending the Silence**, a new essay by film critic Simon Abrams. Kino Lorber, meanwhile, likewise releases a bonus-laden Blu-ray of an even earlier pasta prairie pioneer, Sergio Leone's crossover hit **Fistful of Dollars**, the film that made American ex-pat Clint Eastwood an international star and spread the spaghetti western craze Stateside.



3-D or Not 3-D? Kino answers in the affirmative with its gala new release of William Cameron (Invaders from Mars) Menzies' offbeat 1953 three-dimensional chiller **The Maze** (\$34.95), starring Richard (It Came from Outer Space) Carlson and Veronica Hurst in a macabre tale centering on a strange figure rumored to dwell in a gothic castle in the Scottish Highlands. Restored in association with The Film Foundation (with a special thanks to Martin Scorsese) from the Paramount Archive's original camera negative and scanned in 4K with three-channel stereophonic sound by Eckhard Buttner, Kino's Blu-ray arrives complete with a group audio commentary by 3-D expert Bob Furmanek, prolific author and sometime **Scope** contributor Tom Weaver, film exhibition historian Dr. Robert J. Kiss and soundtrack scholar David Schecter, along with a new interview with costar Hurst, and the original 3-D trailer.

Criterion Collection resurrects a long sought-after title with Frank Borzage's moody Southern gothic **Moonrise** (1948), based on the Theodore Strauss novel and starring Dane Clark as Danny, a perpetually bullied angry young man who can't escape the taint of his father's hanging death. Gail Russell, Ethel Barrymore and Rex Ingram costar. Extras on Criterion's 4k restoration include a conversation with Borzage biographer Herve Dumont and film historian Peter Cowie, along with an essay by critic Phillip Kemp. Criterion likewise rolls out the extras-enriched Blu-ray carpet for Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's 1946 celestial fantasy **A Matter of Life and Death** (aka **Stairway to Heaven**) and John Schlesinger's Times Square-set 1969 classic **Midnight Cowboy** (\$39.95 each), starring Dustin Hoffman and Jon Voight.



## TELE-VIDEO

Kino Lorber delivers great news for fans of vintage sci-fi with its gala **The Outer Limits Season One** (1963-64) collection (7-disc \$99.95), created by tele-visionary Leslie Stevens, with many episodes produced and frequently written by top cathode craftsman Joseph Stefano, all gloriously restored on Blu-ray. The set opens with the premier episode, which stands the test of time as one of the series' most quintessential installments: **The Galaxy Being**, written and directed by Stevens—recently lauded for his daring 1960 indie **Private Property** (VS #102)—and featuring a strong turn by guest star Cliff Robertson, established many of the show's oft-mined themes with its tale of a cosmic transmission that beams a questing alien to Earth where he encounters the lethal fears and foibles of our inferior species. Other standout Season One episodes include **The Zanti Misfits**, costarring Michael Tolan and Bruce Dern, highlighted by the scariest humanoid insect creatures this side of **The Fly**; the stark Shakespearean fable **The Bellerose Shield**, with Martin Landau, Sally Kellerman and Chita Rivera; the Golden Age of Anxiety entry **Nightmare**, starring Ed Nelson, James Shigeta and a youthful Martin Sheen; David McCallum as a young handyman who, a la **Charly**, receives a vast, transformative brain boost, in the British-cast **The Sixth Finger**; and an excellent Henry Silva and Diana Sands in the refreshingly race-neutral **The Mice**, among many more. Extras include episode audio commentaries by David J.

Schow, Gary Gerani, Steve (King Cohen) Mitchell and others, plus an illustrated 40-page booklet with an essay by Schow and a handy episode guide. Remember: “Do not attempt to adjust the picture. We are controlling transmission.”

Acorn Media keeps active on the overseas thriller, mystery and dramatic fronts with several fresh releases. **Brookwood Mysteries Series 4** (4-disc Blu-ray \$59.99) returns series regulars Neill Rea, Fern Sutherland and Nic Sampson to the scenes of the crimes in four new feature-length episodes, while Janet McTeer toplines in crime writer Laura (Prime Suspect) La Plante's **The Governor** (3-disc \$39.99), a gritty series investigating violence and corruption in a British prison, costarring Sophie Okonedo and Idris Elba. On a lighter note, Mackenzie Crook and Toby Jones headline in the cele-

brated sitcom **The Detectorists Series 3** (2-disc \$39.99). New Zealand supplies the setting for **Dear Murderer Series 1** (2-disc \$39.99), based on the true story of controversial lawyer Mark Bungay (Mark Mitchinson) in a miniseries starting in the 1960s and spanning several decades. Marta Dusseldorp, of the **Janet King** series, stars in a continuation of the 1950s-set Australian saga **A Place to Call Home Series 5** (\$39.99), containing 12 episodes on four discs; extras include an interview with costar Jenni Baird. The Down Under intrigues continue in the award-winning culture-clash cop show **East West 101 Series 2** (2-disc \$39.99), starring Don (Sarangoon Road) Hany as an officer working a dangerous beat.

While Shout! Factory celebrates the new incarnation of the enduring cult fave **Mystery Science Theater 3000** (page 40), the label continues to honor the original series with its **Singles Collection** (\$54.97). The six-disc set assembles several episodes previously available individually, gathering **The Crawling Hand**, **The Hellcats**, **Santa Claus Conquers the Martians**, **Eegah**, **I Accuse My Parents** and **Shorts Volume 3**, with new intros by co-creator and original host Joel Hodgson. Holdover extras include the featurettes **Man on Poverty Row: The Films of Sam Newfield** and the Herbert J. Strock profile **Don't Knock the Strock**, along with theatrical trailers and **MST Hour Wraps**. ☹

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**The Phantom of the Movies' VideoScope!**  
See page 6 for details.

## TELE-VIDEO

### DOCTOR WHO: TWICE UPON A TIME (2017 CHRISTMAS SPECIAL) (2017)

☹☹☹☹

D: Rachel Talalay. Peter Capaldi, David Bradley, Pearl Mackie, Mark Gatiss. 60 mins. (BBC Worldwide) 2/18

Following the end of Series 10's climactic episode, **The Doctor Falls**, the badly wounded Twelfth Doctor (Capaldi) awakens aboard the TARDIS refusing to regenerate. Although he has remained in his current incarnation far longer than any previous versions of himself after being imprisoned in his own Confession Dial for some 3.5 billion years by the Time Lords (Series 9, Episode 11, **Heaven Sent**), he's grown weary of the arduous process of adjusting to a new persona. He lands on Earth in an Arctic snowscape and is astonished to come face to face with his very first incarnation (Bradley), who is also refusing to regenerate following the events of **The Tenth Planet** (1966). Both Doctors are then confronted by a British Captain from WW I (Gatiss), who has been taken out of his time by strange, glass-like beings called The Testimony. These beings resurrect Bill Potts (Pearl Mackie), who accompanies the two Doctors and the Captain as they investigate why The Testimony are taking people out of their time streams just before their deaths. As they unravel this mystery, the current and past Doctors must confront the enormity of their reluctance to regenerate and what it would mean to the universe if the Doctor never moves past his first incarnation. The story is a showcase not only for Capaldi, but his wonderful chemistry with Mackie. Sadly, she only had one season as his companion, but it made for some of the best writing the series has seen under Steven Moffat's supervision. The episode also gives us a fine performance by Bradley as the First Doctor, after having portrayed actor William Hartnell in 2013's **An Adventure in Space and Time**. Gatiss, having appeared in previous **Doctor Who** episodes, turns in one last character, probably his greatest in the series. He delivers one of the episode's best lines: after noticing the TARDIS interior is bigger than the ship's exterior would allow, he softly questions, “Is this madness?” There are some surprise (but not surprising) cameos by past companions that send off the Twelfth Doctor. The show's final minutes are Capaldi's finest, as he relents to the inevitability of regeneration. It is a poignant moment, followed by the explosive (literally) introduction of Jodie Whittaker (**Broadchurch**) as the Thirteenth Doctor. Bonus material includes **Doctor Who Extra**, **The End of an Era**, and **Doctor Who Panel: San Diego Comic-Con 2017**. **Doctor Who** returns in Autumn 2018 with new showrunner Chris Chibnall and Whittaker as the first female incarnation of the Doctor. The format will change from 12 45-minute episodes to a 65-minute premiere, followed by 9 50-minute episodes. ☹

—Dan Cziraky



# MARTINE BESWICK FROM BOND GIRL TO HAMMER QUEEN!

As Told To  
Terry & Tiffany DuFoe

Following a successful London modeling stint, 21-year-old Martine Beswick made her movie debut as the exotic Zora in the iconic James Bond adventure **From Russia with Love** (1963), reuniting with screen 007 Sean Connery two years later in **Thunderball**. The Jamaican-born actress next signed on with Hammer Films for major roles in **One Million Years B.C.**, **Prehistoric Women**, and the innovative **Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde** before moving to America, where she launched a long and varied career appearing in films (**Seizure**, **Miami Blues**) and episodic TV shows like **The Six Million Dollar Man**, **Fantasy Island** and **Santa Barbara**. Our dynamic dad/daughter team, Terry & Tiffany DuFoe, recently caught up with Martine Beswick for the following wide-ranging conversation.

**TERRY DUFOE** *You are a classic actress who is not only a "Bond Girl" but also a Hammer Horror legend. You have a very exotic look and everybody automatically assumes that you are just straight English but you're not.*

**MARTINE BESWICK** Absolutely not.

**TD** *Your dad was British but your mom was actually Jamaican, right?*

**MB** Both of them were Jamaican. The whole thing about Jamaicans is that the motto is: "Out of many, one" because there have been so many sort of invasions and takeovers and fighting over the jewel of the Caribbean. So we have everything. We've got Chinese, Indian, English, Portuguese, Spanish, French... you name it, we have it.

**TD** *Everybody always says "most known for the James Bond films." Do you think that you should be most known for the James Bond films or do you think that you should also apply that to the many other things that you've done?*

**MB** Actually, it's interesting because I do Comic-Con with my darling friend, who is like my sister, Caroline Munro. Basically, people always know more about me than I

know about myself. Let's put it that way! You know, they come up and they quote lines from things that I don't even remember. So it's not just Bond. But the main things are really Bond and Hammer. Huge Hammer fans! I'm constantly surprised that people still remember these films that I did 50 years ago. I'm very pleased!

**TD** *In the early days, Hammer horror films were kind of Gothic romantic movies, similar to our classic Universal films. What do you think the appeal of Hammer is?*

**MB** I think it had to do with sort of "tongue firmly placed in cheek." There was always a sort of underlying Britishness about it, which was unique, and it was unique to this company. Lots of other people tried lots of things but no one did it quite like them. First of all, there was a Gothic feel to it and they were sort of luxurious in their production. The characters were always interesting and the cast was, too. And, of course, the main players like Vincent Price, to name but one. There were so many and they became beloved.

**TD** *Can you compare working for Hammer Studios in England versus the way we do things here in America?*

**MB** I always say that I was very lucky to have—I mean, there were lots of "yeas" and "nays"—was that Bond was a family, and so was Hammer. So if you were in, you were in. I did three films with them. Usually, you don't just do one. You end up coming back and doing several. What is interesting is that with all the television that I did in America, I also became family there. It seems that families, or extended families, are very much part of who I am because a lot of the shows that I did in America would call me back. So I ended up doing three or four things with, for example, **The Bionic Man** and **The Fall Guy**. They would bring me back as different characters. So I ended up doing, really, the same thing that I'd done with Bond and Hammer.

**TD** *I believe, if I read this correctly, that it was also a situation of returning to family that resulted in you getting cast in **Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde**, right? I'd heard there was a situation that involved Caroline Munro, who had decided not to do the film.*

**MB** Well, I know she was up for it. I only found that out and we only discussed that recently, in the last few years. But really, the whole story was that I was already living in America and I'd just come over for a holiday. I'd gone into my old agent, which was William Morris at the time, with a friend of mine and my old agent said, "Oh my God! We've been looking for you!" I said, "What do you mean you've been looking for me? You know where I am." They said, "You need to go and see Michael Carreras right now. They're going to do **Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde** and they've been looking for Sister Hyde." Well, I heard this and I started laughing. I said, "What do you mean—he turns into her? That's ridiculous!"



Model Martine Beswick before Bond beckoned.

Anyways, I did go and see him. First of all, I absolutely adored Michael Carreras. We had a really fun relationship. He was one of the funniest, wittiest, most brilliant men ever. I went to see him and I looked at the script and I did laugh. Then I thought, "Oh! This could be really interesting!" and that's how it happened. I signed on the dotted line immediately.

**TD** *When you play someone that used to be a man, how do you do that? How is your body language? What's in your head? Do you try to channel the mannerisms of a man or how did you approach that?*

**MB** Well, it was kind of interesting because I actually looked at her and thought, "You know, we could go a bit deep with this because all of us have male and female in us." Unfortunately, Hammer was going through its change of trying to keep up. They thought that what they should do is have more nudity, which I think was the destruction of Hammer, unfortunately. So basically they were saying, "No, we're just going to get on with it." [Director] Roy Ward Baker was a bit pressured. In fact, we really should have gone deeper into how it was. We did manage to do something with it. I mean, for instance, he would have these moments when he thought he was the woman and I would be, of course, the killer. Male. It was an interesting role to play, actually. Really interesting because there is very much "male" in me, too. So it was key to bring out the male in me and yet be totally female, too. I can't say how I did it. All I know is that I realized what I had to do and just got on with it.

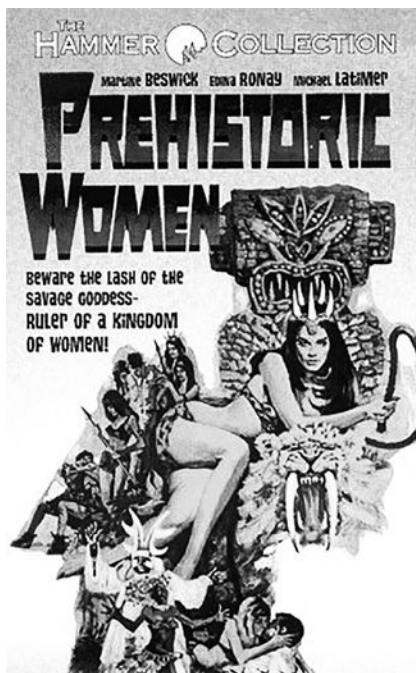
**“Then all of a sudden they wanted full frontal nudity. I said, ‘No. It’s not in the script. I didn’t agree to this.’”**

**Martine Beswick on  
Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde**

*TD You mentioned Hammer and the nudity. I understand you kind of had a discussion with them where you basically objected to that.*

*MB* Well, obviously there was a nude scene where you had to realize that suddenly *he* turns into *her* and she realizes what she has—what her body is and the power of that body. It was very important, so I said “absolutely, yes” for that. Then all of a sudden they wanted full frontal nudity. I said, “No. It’s not in the script. I didn’t agree to this.” And I fought over it. It was a bit dodgy for a while, but then I just turned around and said, “Look, we’ve got to stop this. This is not working.” We kind of got back on track and made the film that we wanted to make. However, it’s interesting because years later I was doing one of those commentaries with Roy Ward Baker and [screenwriter] Brian Clemens, who I absolutely adored, too. We were doing this commentary with the film and he [Baker] turned to me and said, “You know, I really wish we had the male/female aspect of this.” I said, “Thank you, Roy!” I got to be right!

*TD You had to have had some conversations with Ralph Bates because, first of all, it was kind of crazy that you guys really didn’t look alike. But I want to know if off set, when the cameras were not rolling, did you guys kind of watch each other? Did you have any conversations about the film?*



*MB* Oh yes, we did, actually. Interestingly, we would travel together. We got picked up in the morning together, so we kind of would be like, “Oh God, it’s too early!” Then we’d get there and we’d do all the stuff and the interesting thing was that we shared our bodies because there were times when suddenly I turn into him and the hands come in or something, and we were literally sharing our bodies. Then we’d start laughing and then we’d be in the car, going back and we’d start talking about what we had done. We did a lot of giggling. That is the other thing about working at Hammer, because there was a lot of giggling in between—and I loved that. In fact, really, if there’s no giggling in my life, forget it. I’m not interested.

*TD Is it true that for Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde you won an award?*

*MB* I did and I didn’t even know! They came to Rome to present it to me and it was really lovely. But, unfortunately, everything from my whole Rome life was left behind. I packed my suitcases, I said “I’ve had enough” and I had gone off to America. So I have no idea where it is and what happened to it, unfortunately.

*TD Your very first Hammer film has become hugely iconic: One Million Years B.C. Talk to us about working with people like Raquel Welch and Ray Harryhausen.*

*MB* Ah, I loved Ray! There was something so, sort of old world, charming gentleman about him. He was very tall and quite handsome. Dry humor and witty. I just wanted to sit at his feet. I just adored him. Working with Raquel—we actually worked really well together, especially when we had to do the fight. It was very interesting when we just came together on doing that. But the backstory on that was the fact that I actually was afraid. I didn’t really want to do the film and I tried to get out of it because of [future husband] John Richardson. I saw many photographs of John Richardson before and I was absolutely terrified that if I did the film, my single life would be over!

*TD And it was, wasn’t it?*

*MB* Oh my God! To the point that I actually tried to get out of it and Michael Carreras was going to sue me because I said I didn’t want to do it, after I had already said yes. When I arrived in the Canary Islands to join up with them, I arrived a week after they had started. We landed and he [Michael Carreras] came to the plane and helped me off and said, “Oh! So you tried to get out of this, did you?” That was his opening line, and I said, “Well, I’m here, aren’t I?” and that was the beginning of our relationship. As we walked into



the hut that was the airport, across the room was John Richardson. Michael Carreras was right next to me and said he had never seen anything like it. There was an electricity that went between the two of us and within two days that was the end of that. It was all over!

*TD Is it true that you guys literally made up the language for the film and that it wasn’t anything that some scientist came up with?*

*MB* Oh no! We did! That was also funny. We sat around and made it up. We came up with these words. “Oh, how did that sound? Oh yes, let’s try that one!” It was fun.

*TD I would like to talk a bit more about your catfight scene with Raquel Welch. I don’t know how Hammer was as far as the safety of their actors, but was that all you and Raquel doing all of that or were there stunt people involved?*

*MB* Well, I don’t know if you know the story, but Raquel and I weren’t really...we didn’t really become sisters. Let’s just put it that way. We respectfully were actresses working together. That was it. It was a different camp. She was in one camp, I was in the other. I was with Michael and his lot and she was sort of...anyways, when it came to this scene, we were told that we would have stunt doubles. We were sitting in our chairs and we’re waiting for the stunt doubles to arrive. They come out and they are a completely different size. They don’t look at all like us, as far as we’re concerned, and we can’t believe this. So we look at each other and we go, “Absolutely not!” and we turned and we said, “No, we’ve got to do it.” They said no, we can’t do it because of insurance. We both said, “Look, we’re both dancers. We have done choreography. We can do it.” So they brought in a stunt guy and we went through all the motions. I thought it was pretty good. We were very pleased with ourselves. We did a pretty damn good fight.



**“Wet leather bikinis are not comfortable! And there was a lot of wetness going on!”**  
**Martine Beswick on**  
***One Million Years B.C.***

**TD** You did! That Raquel poster was everywhere. What did you think when that movie became so popular? Hammer was known for doing some pretty good films, but that film became iconic. Of course, you had Ray Harryhausen on effects and all that. too.

**MB** I think, first of all, it was Raquel's...I mean, she was actually forced into doing this film. It was her sort of coming-out film. She wasn't terribly happy about it because she thought it was sort of a little blah nothing. The point was, it was Ray Harryhausen. Ray Harryhausen really was a pioneer and also *hugely* respected today by Spielberg, Peter Jackson, you name it. Everyone is like, “He is fantastic! He is the one that inspired me to do what I'm doing today.” So I think it had to do with Harryhausen. I don't think there's been anything quite like that. Everybody has tried to do the prehistoric thing before but no one has done it quite like him. I think that was the thing that won everyone over.



**TD** I understand that Harryhausen had a very unique way of working and that he was actually involved in directing the scenes that had his dinosaurs in them. How was that done? Didn't he drive around with a truck and direct the actors?

**MB** There were times that we had to stop rolling because we were all giggling so much. I mean, because there he was with his stick on a flatbed truck and waving it around to get the eye line. There we were with our spears going after these nothings. We were just acting away and doing it and “Oh my God, these terrible, terrible things! We're going to kill it!” And then all of a sudden turn and see our fellow actors doing these ridiculous things and we'd fall about. So that's what happened.

**TD** Those fur bikinis looked like they were the most uncomfortable things to wear, ever!

**MB** Actually, no. They were designed by Carl Toms, who was actually a really fantastic designer. Basically, they were bikinis. However, wet leather bikinis are not comfortable! And there was a lot of wetness going on! Rain. Lakes. All sorts of things. But apart from that, they were fitted bikinis.

**TD** After doing *One Million Years B.C.*, were you worried when they came to you with *Prehistoric Women*? Were you concerned that it was just going to be another prehistoric-themed movie and a bit of a rehash?

**MB** Michael Carreras and I bonded instantly. It was Michael, his wife Sue and John and I. We were like stuck together. He [Carreras] said, “I want you to be my queen.” And I went, “Oh, really? Okay, that would be lovely. What are you talking about?” He said, “Well, I'm going to direct a film I've written called *Prehistoric Women* and you would be my evil queen.” And I went, “Oh! I love it!” That's how it began. We re-dressed all the *Million Years* sets and I did it about two weeks after I finished the other one. Everything was made in the studio. First of all, I was going to do it because I loved Michael Carreras and we had such a ball. I mean, I'm going to do it seriously, no matter what happens. But we did have a lot of fun.

**TD** I've read a few interviews and I get the impression you didn't think *Prehistoric Women* was quite the classic that *One Million Years B.C.* was.



**MB** Oh no! It's a complete piece of rubbish! But the thing about it is that it is classic cult now. I mean, people are mad for it, and they're putting it out again. It has just turned into this never-ending, amazing film.

**TD** You know, we interviewed Veronica Carlson, another beautiful Hammer girl. She talked about how she had a great friendship with Sir Roger Moore, who of course was James Bond. You, however, got to act with the “original James Bond,” Sean Connery. Were you personal off-screen?

**MB** I was pretty young. I was in my 20s and I was pretty green when I did the first one, *From Russia with Love*. We met for the first time and we were rehearsing the fight and we did these PR pictures. Those photographs are the ones that everybody loves most because there is a cheekiness that we had between us! It was instant and it had nothing to do with sexiness. This was like two naughty kids being mischievous and it carried on all the way through. When I came back to do *Thunderball*, it was sort of “wink-wink, nudge-nudge.” We actually hung out for a while because of [director] Terence Young. So we kind of all hung out together and his [Connery's] wife at the time was Diane Cilento, who I absolutely adored. So there was a little family. There were two camps actually. There was Cubby [Broccoli] and Harry [Saltzman] on one side and then there was Terence and [producer] Kevin McClory on the other side with Sean. We were in Nassau for two months, so there was a lot of dinners and laughs and a lot of work.

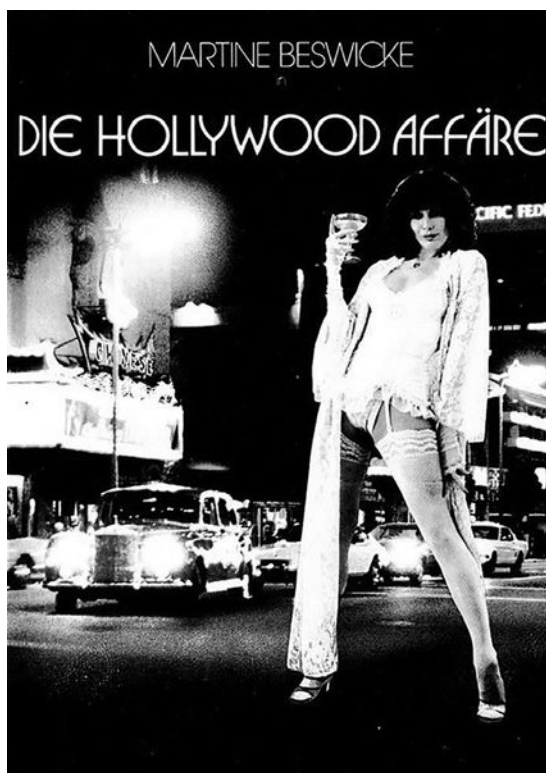
**TD** I've got to ask you about one of our favorite films that you did with an actor who we love so much from shows like *Dark Shadows*, Jonathan Frid. You did a movie called *Seizure* with him.

**“We all were being paid peanuts, barely SAG minimum and we're all living in the same house, and working in the same house. It was an unbelievable experience.”**  
**Martine Beswick on *Seizure***

**MB** That was one of the most amazing experiences. This is also Oliver Stone's first film, which he has tried to bury. There's no way he's going to be able to bury it because it has become a cult classic as well. They had taken this house in Canada in the Laurentian Mountains and there was a big lake and it was actually a really beautiful setting. We shot in all the rooms. So all the bedrooms that all of us were sleeping in all became sets, particularly the main bedroom where Jonathan was. So he would wake up with all of these lights and equipment around him. He was Mister Curmudgeon! He rumbled and grumbled about it. What can I tell you? It was absolutely chaotic. We had no money. We all were being paid peanuts, barely SAG minimum and we're all living in the same house, and working in the same house. It was an unbelievable experience.

**TD** You also worked in that film with Mary Woronov.

**MB** Mary and I became really good friends; we had met before. And Herve Villechaize was one sexy small man and he used that! And he was madder than a hatter!



**TD** I've heard that he was a little man but a big ladies man!

**MB** Oh, he was! Not only that, he was very stylish and he also knew his stuff. He was really bright and very suave. He knew his wines and he knew his history. He and Oliver became great friends. Because I was so in touch with all of them for a while, I remember them coming to dinner at my place. The two of them turned up looking like twins. Both of them in velvet smoking jackets, smoking cigars.

**TD** You worked with Herve at least twice—you were in *Fantasy Island* as well.

**MB** Yeah! He was quite something, actually.

**TD** One of your films that we have to ask you about had a couple of classic lines, like “Let's all go make a mooovie!” and “Bouncy bouncy!”—which is, of course, the film *The Happy Hooker Goes Hollywood*. What was it like playing *Xaviera Hollander*?

**MB** I must say that, first of all, I was not keen on the producers, and we won't even go there because we could do a whole documentary on how horrible they were. But when I went up for it, the thing that probably got me was the fact that it was going to be my film with my name above the title. I thought, “Good Lord, why not?!” Also, I liked the idea because it was a real woman, *Xaviera Hollander*, and she did this and she was pretty wild. So I thought this could be fun to do and it was. Adam West played supposedly my love interest and there were moments when we had to be in bed together. It was one of my favorite scenes and we're in bed together in this tiny bedroom. It's supposed to be a closed set and they're trying to hang from the ceiling, watching us. There's Adam and I, in bed together and I think we've got pants on and nothing else, and we're supposed to be doing...whatever. We're lying there and he turns to me and he says, “Don't move.” I said, “Don't be ridiculous. We've got to move!” This is before the camera starts. He said, “You don't understand. You don't understand what my fans are going to say.” I said, “Well, what about mine! Your *Batman* fans and my Bond fans. Let's face it. They're not going to be happy about this at all!”

**TD** And that movie had *Phil Silvers* and *Richard Deacon* in it as well.

**MB** Yes, I still laugh because there was a scene that was set up where *Richard Deacon* and *Adam West* had to end up in drag. I thought I was going to die when I saw them! Absolutely hysterical and we teased



**Adam** because we said, “I'm sorry. You look like you've always worn high heels, darling!” And he looked at me and went “Stop it!” as he sauntered off in his high heels.

**TD** Did you get to meet *Xaviera Hollander* at all in preparation for the role?

**MB** No! I wish I had! Of course, not with *these* producers. They were so bloody cheap.

**TD** You've described yourself a lot lately as kind of putting the acting thing behind you, but that may not be so true. I understand you're getting back into acting in *House of the Gorgon*.

**MB** It is me, *Caroline Munro*, *Veronica Carlson*, *Christopher Neame* and *Caroline's* daughter *Georgina Dugdale*. We did it in March in Texas!

**TD** When you're saying *Gorgon*, you are talking about the old mythological creature with the snakes in the hair?

**MB** Uh-huh! And *Caroline* and I are the bad sisters. The myth is that there were three of them. *Medusa* was killed and then these other two were left. They became sort of vengeful because their sister had been killed. They were not very nice and they turned people to stone. For me, this is like a one-off because I don't really want to work that hard anymore. I mean, I'm not *Judi Dench*. I retired because I lost the passion. Part of the passion was this incredible joy that I got out of acting. I mean, I was just obsessed. The point is, if one is not having fun, then one does not do those things anymore. ♪



## The Phantom's That's Blaxploitation!

### BAADASSSSS! (2004) 8881/2

D: Mario Van Peebles. Mario Van Peebles, Joy Bryant, Ossie Davis, David Alan Grier, Nia Long, Paul Rodriguez, Saul Rubinek, Khleo Thomas. 108 mins. (Mill Creek)

Few, if any, fiction films have captured the realities of independent filmmaking more vividly than Mario Van Peebles' brilliant **Baadasssss!** Writer/director/actor Van Peebles' labor of love/act of psychic patricide resonates on several levels. For starters, in dramatizing his now-late guerrilla filmmaker father Melvin Van Peebles' struggles to create his groundbreaking 1971 indie **Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song** he took on the daunting task of portraying his dad while casting a young actor (Thomas) as his own then-13-year-old self. Secondly, he undertook the project with many of the same restrictions Van Peebles Sr. experienced—a tight budget and even tighter shooting sked. In addition to unerringly reproducing a specific time and place—Hollywood's fringes circa 1970—Mario lends considerable intensity to his true-life tale, guiding the viewer through every phase of **Sweet Sweetback's** troubled genesis, from story conception to fund-raising (a pre-ostracized Bill Cosby served as a late-arriving major backer) to filming with an integrated non-union crew (many culled from the under-the-radar porn-movie ranks) to trying to distribute the finished product when all the traditional channels were closed. Much more than a simple filmmaking primer, **Baadasssss!** brims with drama, humor and genuine suspense. Beyond Mario's dead-on interpretation of his determined dad, a talented ensemble cast—including Rubinek as Melvin's bemused agent, comic Rodriguez as Latino cameraman Jose Garcia, and T.K. Carter as Cosby—brings the diverse characters to flesh-and-blood life. Adam (**Batman**) West and Sally (**All in the Family**) Struthers also surface in amusing cameos, as a gay would-be producer and agent Rubinek's rotund spouse, respectively. An important story vibrantly retold, **Baadasssss!** represents a wild ride through changing times. Meanwhile, Vinegar Syndrome revives the reel deal with its gala new Blu-ray edition of **Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song**, newly scanned and restored in 4k from the 35mm original camera negative. Copious extras include an archival career interview with Melvin Van Peebles, an extensive Q&A with Melvin from the 2013 Black Panther Film Festival, making-of documentary, an interview with actress Niva Ruschell, commentary by film historian Sergio Mitre, still gallery, trailer and booklet.

### ORIGINAL GANGSTAS (1996)

888

D: Larry Cohen. Fred Williamson, Jim Brown, Pam Grier, Richard Roundtree, Ron O'Neal, Robert Forster. 98 mins. (Kino Lorber) 10/17

Veteran auteur Cohen, who helmed such seminal Fred (The Hammer) Williamson vehicles as **Black Caesar** (VS #21) and sequel **Hell Up in Harlem**, rounds up several of the genre's prime usual suspects for a high-energy, straight-ahead urban actioner pitting old-school code-bound heroes against contempo amoral gangbangers and succeeds in resurrecting the blaxploitation genre without resorting to spoofery. Allegedly, a real-life return visit to a gang-plagued Gary, Indiana (which had by then replaced Detroit as America's "Murder Capital") by Williamson, who grew up there, sparked the project. Here, Williamson essays the role of John Bookman, a former NFL star who journeys homeward to investigate the wounding of his grocer dad (Oscar Brown Jr.) at the handguns of present-day members of the Rebels, the very gang he'd founded decades before. Seems Bookman Sr. had made the mistake of fingering the Rebels who'd slain young basketball player Kenny (Timothy Lewis) in a drive-by. Kenny's absentee father, former boxer Trevor (Brown), also surfaces to comfort his understandably hostile ex-wife Laurie (Grier). When the efforts of police, represented by Forster, city officials (embodied by Charles Napier and Wings Hauser), and a mediating minister (Paul Winfield) fail to facilitate justice. Fred, Jim and Pam seek to incite internecine warfare among the Rebels and two rival gangs. Finally, though, our lead trio, joined by former **Shaft** Roundtree and **Superfly** O'Neal, meet the lethal gangbangers in a bloody climactic showdown. Actual East St. Louis and Gary, Indiana, locations add gritty authenticity. An excellent cast, including the mostly unknowns who portray the local gang kids, a mixed hip-hop and '70s soul soundtrack (with an on-screen cameo by the Chi-Lites), plenty of promised action and a serious subtext about the fate of urban wastelands like Gary contribute to an impressive package. Kino's Blu-ray arrives with a commentary by the ever-entertaining Cohen.

### SUPERFLY (1972) 8881/2

D: Gordon Parks, Jr. Ron O'Neal, Carl Lee, Sheila Frazier, Julius W. Harris, Charles McGregor. 96 mins. (Warner Archive) 6/18

O'Neal is first-rate as a midlevel uptown NYC coke dealer whose crimes pale beside those perpetrated by local police and politicians. Noted still photographer turned filmmaker Parks, Jr.'s influential flick has a knowing, accurate POV, though not an especially popular one among many mainstream critics of the day, who especially bristled at the notion of a drug pusher hero and desecrated the pic's rampant "amorality." McGregor, also strong in scripter Philip Fenty's thematically related **The Baron**, lends memorable support as doomed addict Freddie, while Curtis Mayfield composes and performs one of



the standout film scores of any genre, creating such crossover hits as the title theme and "Freddie's Dead." **Superfly** at last joins the Blu-ray ranks via Warner Archive.

### WELCOME HOME, BROTHER CHARLES

(1975) 888

D: Jamaa Fanaka. Mario Monte, Rheatha Grey, Stan Kamber, Tiffany Peters. 91 mins.

### EMMA MAE (1976) 888

D: Jamaa Fanaka. Jerri Hayes, Ernest Williams II, Malik Carter, Charles D. Brooks III. 100 mins. (Vinegar Syndrome) 3/18

While **Welcome Home, Brother Charles** (previously available on a bargain DVD label as **Soul Vengeance**), with its infamous death-by-phallus fantasy sequence, may be the more notorious of the two Fanaka films featured here, **Emma Mae** emerges as the more successful effort. Back in the '80s, Unicorn Video pushed the pic as a new blaxploitation number under the title **Black Sister's Revenge**, complete with a cover depicting a zoftig fox brandishing a pistol and machine gun. In actuality, **Emma Mae** is a funky slice-of-life drama incorporating a few mild, ephemeral exploitation elements. Fanaka documents the social adjustment of the eponymous protagon (Hayes), a naive but resourceful Deep South college girl who moves in with her more sophisticated and cynical cousins, a clan of California African Americans. It's only when Emma hooks up with local lowlife Jess (Williams) that the plot detours in some unlikely directions—as when Emma Mae, out of nowhere, decides to operate a car wash to raise bail for her errant beau; when that fails, she sticks up a nearby bank. **Emma Mae** shapes up as an uneven but compelling character study, rich in regional detail and well worth scoping out. Copious extras on Vinegar Syndrome's restored 2k Blu-ray double bill include **The History of the L.A. Rebellion & Jamaa Fanaka**, an appreciation by UCLA Film & Television Archive Director Jan-Christopher Horak; a 2017 post-screening Q&A with actress Hayes; and trailers. 8

## Rob Freese's DRIVE-IN DELIRIUM!

### GODMONSTER OF INDIAN FLATS: SPECIAL EDITION (1973) ♂♂♂

D: Fredric Hobbs. Christopher Brooks, Stuart Lancaster, E. Kerrigan Prescott, Robert Hirschfeld, Richard Marion, Karen Ingenthron, Steven Kent Browne. 90 mins. (AGFA/Something Weird Video) 7/18

Better strap yourself in for this obscure drive-in oddity, friends. Sheep rancher Eddie (Marion) witnesses the birth of a mutated sheep creature. Dr. Clemens (Prescott) and his hippie assistant Mariposa (Ingenthron) bring Eddie and the mutated sheep thing back to the doc's lab. Clemens conducts tests on the creature, which grows to giant size and radiates a horrible-smelling phosphorous gas the Doc has also found in the local mines. Meanwhile, Mr. Barnstable (Brooks) comes to town to try and buy up local mining leases for the Wright Corporation, but Mayor Silverdale (Lancaster) declines to sell any of the land. When Barnstable refuses to take "no" for an answer, Silverdale has his dim-witted henchman Phillip Mandove (Browne) frame Barnstable for attempted murder. After escaping his lynching party (!), Barnstable seeks refuge in Dr. Clemens' lab. Silverdale's

posse hunts Barnstable down and, in the subsequent melee, the 8-foot giant mutant sheep breaks loose and escapes. During its brief reign of terror, the woolly monstroid scares some kids having a picnic and dances with Mariposa before the posse lassos and captures it. In the end, Silverdale reveals to Barnstable that he bought up all the townspeople's mining leases and made a bundle selling them to the Wright Corporation himself. Silverdale tells the citizens that the town will soon enjoy a tourist boom as he plans on putting the sheepazoid on display for all to see. Dr. Clemens and Eddie convince the people it is all a trick, and the citizens revolt and dump the sheep thing in the city dump, where it explodes. In the distance, a herd of grazing sheep are exposed to the phosphorous gas from deep in the mines below. Writer-producer-director Hobbs' contribution to the "nature/animal run amok" subgenre is certainly a memorable outing. Although painfully confusing at times, the film exerts an undeniably hypnotic spell—once you start watching it you can't pull your eyes from it because you have to see what will happen next. Because of the ridiculous-looking creature, this film was supposedly never released, but I find it hard to believe it didn't play a drive-in somewhere. Bizarro-world film junkies will delight in this whacked-out creature feature while others will simply scratch their heads and wonder what the hell is going on. Extras include a bonus second feature, **The Legend of Bigfoot**, in a new 2K restoration, along with bonus shorts and trailers from the AGFA vaults.

**LEATHERFACE: THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE III (1990) ♂♂♂**  
D: Jeff Burr. Kate Hodge, William Butler, Ken Foree, Viggo Mortensen, R.A. Mihailoff, Tom Everett. 85 mins. (Warner Archive) 2/18

Bickering yuppies Michelle (Hodge) and Ryan (Butler) encounter a cannibal clan while driving through Texas on their way to Florida. Survivalist Benny (genre fave Foree) tries to keep the yuppie-geeks alive against the sicko family led by Junior (the titular Leatherface, Mihailoff), a hulking, chainsaw-toting hayseed who wears a mask made from human flesh. The third installment in the seminal splatter series is actually closer in style to the original and succeeds in paying homage to the first film (as well as the second) while piling up the expected gruesome shocks and



twisted chuckles. A new family is introduced that includes a wheelchair-bound matriarch and a cute little blond girl who carries a baby's skeleton stitched together as a doll and who sits in papa Leatherface's lap and gives him kisses. Genre scribe David J. Schow's lively script keeps the action progressing at a rapid pace and offers many priceless nuggets of dialogue along the way. (E.g., "There's roadkill all over Texas," "Because if you don't poke 'em, they won't leak," and the stomach-distressing classic, "Junior likes them private parts.") After setting his first film, **The Offspring** (which deserves a lavish Blu-ray special edition), in Tennessee, director Burr proved the perfect choice to direct this demented drama of Southern-fried craziness. Foree's survivalist character is one of the best heroes in the entire series, while Caroline Williams, the radio DJ heroine from **Chainsaw 2**, appears in a brief cameo as a TV news reporter. The bloody mayhem includes face sewing, yuppie nailed to a chair, chainsaw evisceration, exploding fingers, blasted-off ear, face sucking with a severed head, a pit of melting bodies, and sledge-O-matic yuppie brain smashing. The ratings board came down hard, branding the pic with an X for violence and delaying its release date for months. It was then banned all over the world. Warner Archive's Blu-ray includes a filmmaker's audio commentary, the making-of doc **The Saw Is Family, We Know What to Do with Them Parts** (deleted scenes), alternate ending, original theatrical trailer and TV spots. Although much maligned during its theatrical release, **Leatherface** delivers the goods. Never forget, friends: "The Saw Is Family!" ♂





# THE SHARKING TRUTH!

## SHARK SCHOLAR GEORGE BURGESS FROM JAWS TO SHARKNADO

As Told To Don Vaughan

George Burgess knows sharks. As the Director Emeritus of the Florida Program for Shark Research at the University of Florida in Gainesville, he oversaw the International Shark Attack File, which collects data on every reported shark attack around the world. Burgess retired from the ISAF in November 2017 but continues his work into shark research and conservancy. Burgess recently talked with **VideoScope** about sharks as a cinematic subgenre, what Hollywood gets right and wrong, and why sharks really aren't as bad as we think they are.—DV

*DV What is it about sharks that fascinates you?*

**GB** I guess we all get attracted to something early on. As a kid, I enjoyed seeing and reading about sharks and I thought it would be really great to become a marine biologist. As luck would have it, I was able to roll that into a career. Back in the 1950s, when I was a youngster, my dad was in the U.S. Air Force, so we were stationed around the world. For the early part of my youth we were stationed in Naples, Italy. We didn't have television there, so I grew up reading books. My dad had a copy of Jacques Cousteau's **The Silent World**, the first book chronicling Cousteau's early days of doing scuba diving. Among the photos in the book were some of sharks, and I turned to those pages first. I was hooked.

*DV How long did you work with the International Shark Attack File?*

**GB** The International Shark Attack File was started in 1958. It was originally housed at the Smithsonian Institution, where it was initially backed with Navy funding. It operated until around 1968, then went into mothballs for 20 years because it didn't have the benefit of a good shark scientist in charge of it. In 1988 we brought it to the University of Florida in Gainesville. We reinvigorated the program and changed the name from Shark Attack File to the International Shark Attack File because we thought the name better reflected the interest of the research we were doing. So from 1988 until November 2017, it grew under my care and that of my many assistants.

*DV What was the ISAF's primary mission?*

**GB** During WW II a lot of military personnel entered the sea in unexpected ways: their planes were shot down or their boats were sunk. So the U.S. Navy instituted a program to find an anti-shark measure but was unable to produce a good product. They did produce one they called Shark Chaser, but it was more a psychological thing [for those in the water] than an effective deterrent. The Navy continued its research into the 1950s in an effort to solve a situation it started studying in the mid-1940s. The Shark Attack File began in 1958 as part of that effort, intending to document all known shark attacks to look for commonality of cause. With knowledge of these common factors, perhaps they could develop an anti-shark measure. But here we are 60 years later and we're still looking for anti-shark measures that are effective on a personal level. The maintenance of the File and investigating every attack that occurs is indeed a mission that is worthwhile since we are still finding evidence of commonality. Armed with that information, we can make recommendations on how to reduce the risk of shark attack for people entering the seas. Happily, it's not a common phenomenon—we've been averaging only four or five shark-related deaths per year worldwide over the past decade.

*DV How many shark attacks does the ISAF currently contain?*

**GB** We have more than 6,000 individual shark attack investigations in the File. The earliest attack we can fully document occurred in the mid 1500s.

*DV Are you a fan of shark movies?*

**GB** I can't say that there have been a lot of them that rate highly on my list of cinematic excellence, but one or two stand out as worthwhile. Most of the rest are definitely in the C or lower-grade categories.

*DV What was the first shark movie you saw?*

**GB** I think the first one was [the 1971 documentary] **Blue Water, White Death**. I dug that as someone who was interested in sharks. It had the first really fantastic underwater footage of sharks and, of course, it had some stuff that retrospectively was over the top. But that said, it was generally impressive footage. From the standpoint of real moviemaking, however, **Jaws** is by far the best. It was done very well for the genre, and the acting and all the other aspects made it a classic. That said, it was replete with factual errors of commission and omission. So a guy like myself, a shark scientist, can't help but watch **Jaws** and laugh at things along the way. When **Jaws** came out in 1975, I was a grad student at the University of North Carolina, and I remember going to the movie with other grad students. We sat in the back and while everyone else was oohing and aahing, we were laughing and having a great time because there were multiple scientific er-

# JAWS



rors. That said, the subsequent sequels to **Jaws** got increasingly worse over time and the errors of omission and commission that could be overlooked in the first film became increasingly ludicrous as the series went on. I can't say anything good about any of them.

*DV Why do you feel Hollywood loves sharks so much? Literally scores of movies featuring sharks have been produced over the years.*

**GB** Sharks equal money, and that is key. When you find a formula that people want to see, then you go back to the well over and over again. The same thing goes with journalism—sharks are a story. It doesn't matter how common or uncommon it is, a shark attack is a worthy story to be covered, whether it's in print journalism or on television. And, of course, on television the line between entertainment and journalism is becoming increasingly blurred. So it's no surprise that when you see a shark story occurring on a 24-hour news channel, they'll tease the shark story at the top of the half-hour segment and they hold off showing it until the last five minutes. Back in 2001, a series of shark attacks occurred in sequence around the United States, initiated by a really tragic case involving a young child in Florida. The media immediately hopped on the attacks; the only story that was competing with it was the Gary Condit story in Washington, D.C., that quickly ran out of steam. The shark stories took off and it became the "Summer of the Shark." It was the events of 9/11 that took sharks completely off of the news map. I was doing 30 or 40 interviews a day preceding 9/11, and no one called me until the last days of the year to talk about sharks again. So why are sharks popular? Because people like them. When I was a teenager, you didn't have a lot of sequels to movies—there was one movie and that was it. But Hollywood quickly discovered that if one movie sold well, they could make a sequel to it and sell it again and again. That's what happened with sharks.

**“What can be more terrifying than bobbing in the water and not knowing what’s under our feet?”**

**George Burgess**

*DV Also, sharks are genuinely terrifying animals. They make good villains.*

**GB** There are a lot of animals on land that can bite us, and quite a few that can consume us. But we don’t behold them in the same way. Lions and tigers kill more people than sharks do every year, and literally eat humans. So why are they not the same villains? I think part of it is that we can see them, whereas sharks are the demon in the closet or under the bed when the lights go out. We can’t see them, but they can see us, and what can be more terrifying than bobbing in the water and not knowing what’s under our feet? So there is an automatic storyline in our psyche, and sharks pay a price for that.

*DV Based on your years of research, what does Hollywood usually get right about sharks and shark behavior?*

**GB** I like the theme music! We have to keep in mind that Hollywood movies are works of fiction, and no one should come to expect a work of fiction to be absolutely accurate because then it would be a documentary. I would say to those who saw **Jaws** in 1975 and haven’t been in the water since then because they’re scared: learn a little more about sharks and then you’ll realize that there were things that were exaggerated and so forth. That movie wasn’t meant to be a documentary and it’s your problem if you thought it was. The art of a good movie, like a good book, is to have enough information that is as close to accurate as possible to engage the viewer or the reader into believing it’s real. So obviously the best movies involving sharks had the best common understanding of sharks of the day. That said, the common understanding of sharks in 1975 was very different than it is today. You couldn’t make **Jaws** today in precisely the same way because the average person knows more about sharks now, so some of the stuff they saw as factual in 1975 would be pooh-poohed by better-educated viewers. And in fact, that’s one of the things that made **Jaws** important from a scientific perspective. There was some misinformation in there and it started a conversation which allowed scientists to educate the public and over time, since sharks do sell and sharks in magazines and books and TV shows have become increasingly popular, the real story about sharks has gradually been entering the mainstream little by little. You have generations of people now who have grown up with a better understand-

ing of sharks. In some ways it was a double-edged sword. Obviously, the early characterizations of sharks as evil man-eaters was not good for sharks and it spurred an upswing in sport fishing for sharks, which resulted in a lot of dead sharks hanging on docks. So that was bad for sharks, and in fact it initiated a decline in shark populations in the U.S. that required serious scientific management of fisheries. The flip side was it promoted interest in sharks and also demonstrated that we didn’t know very much about sharks scientifically, which opened some doors for the funding of shark research.

*DV Going through Jaws, can you give us some examples of blatant errors regarding great white sharks? What is grossly inaccurate?*

**GB** One of the most glaring errors, which always draws great laughs when I give talks on the perception of sharks in modern society, is when the biologist Hooper, played by Richard Dreyfus, is looking at a body. That is not what biologists who study sharks do—although I’m an exception to that. But most biologists are not going to look at bodies, not to mention do an autopsy. It’s one of the early bites in the movie, and Hooper says something to the effect, “This was no boating accident! This was caused by a large *Squalus*!” However, that is the genus of the common spiny dogfish shark, which only grows to two and a half to three feet in length and has never attacked a human. It’s a small shark that doesn’t even have typical shark-like teeth. The screenwriters were obviously trying to “scientificize,” if you will, Dreyfus’s character to help the audience appreciate that he was a biologist. The greatest error of all is the notion that the shark has a memory of certain people or is seeking revenge. Going after the boat and individuals is beyond the tiny brain of a shark. Most of their brain is allocated to their senses. There is nothing there for thinking.

*DV Are great white sharks territorial animals, as portrayed in Jaws?*

**GB** No, great white sharks are migratory and move along frequently. One of the problems, of course, is when there is a shark attack, some people will say, we’re going to go out and “catch that bastard.” If they go back to where the attack occurred, they will strike out because that shark is far away by the time they get out there. There are some species that are territorial, but the great white shark is able to travel many miles over the course of a day.

*DV Let’s move on to Jaws II. Which makes me ask: would a shark attack a helicopter?*

**GB** No, they would never attack a helicopter! Nor would they try to crash through the wall of an aquarium, as in **Jaws 3-D**. That’s where it got completely ridiculous. Of course, the end of the extreme are the **Sharknado** movies, which have gone from stretching the imagination to self-satire.



*Where the Buoy Are: Blake Lively seeks safety in shark-infested scene from The Shallows.*

*DV I wasn’t going to ask you about the Sharknado movies, but since you brought them up, I’m curious: Do you watch them, just for the entertainment value?*

**GB** When the first **Sharknado** movie came out, as luck would have it, I was at a professional shark meeting. I had flipped it on because people like you were calling to ask me about it in preparation for it airing, so I watched it just long enough to see the female lead, and that was as far as I could go. With all due respect to whoever the female lead was [Tara Reid], she wasn’t good enough to keep me engaged.

*DV In your opinion, what are the most erroneous myths about sharks that Hollywood seems to regularly promote?*

**GB** The most obvious one is that all sharks are man-eaters, that they are out there looking for humans to consume. We’re not denizens of the seas. When we enter the water, we’re ecotourists, so we’re not in the food web of sharks simply because we don’t live in the ocean. Just like we make choices of food based on what’s available to us, so do sharks. Humans are not a normal part of the marine environment, so sharks normally aren’t going to go after humans as a prey item. Do they occasionally bite us, either out of choice or by mistake? We record around 80 shark attacks worldwide each year. But

most shark bites around the world are cases of mistaken identity in which the shark misinterprets movements of human beings as being those of normal prey and quickly lets go after discovering it doesn't taste like the mullet it thought it would be, or because the prey is too big for it. But on some occasions, larger predatory sharks like the great white shark, the bull shark, and the tiger shark, which can consume larger prey items, will go after a person because we are the right size and readily approached because of our awkwardness in the sea, which can be provocative to a shark. The kicking of our feet and the movement of our hands are provocative because sharks are attracted to irregular movements.

*DV I'd like to get your thoughts on a few other popular shark movies. Let's start with **Deep Blue Sea**, which features intelligent, genetically engineered mako sharks.*

*GB I loved Samuel L. Jackson. He was the best shark in the film. I enjoyed him, and that's all I can say for that movie.*

*DV How about **The Shallows**?*

*GB Blake Lively is beautiful, I love her. Again, that's all I can say!*

*DV How accurate is the behavior of the sharks in **The Shallows**? Lively's character is trapped on a buoy and the sharks won't leave her alone.*

*GB You know, there is a certain element of truth to that kind of thing in that a solitary human in a vulnerable position will be approached by sharks. It's not inconceivable that a person in that kind of situation would literally fear for her life under those circumstances. I would say that of the shark-movie genre, **The Shallows** is more believable than many of the others, which obviously have become increasingly farfetched. So I would say **The Shallows** is the second best fictional shark movie after **Jaws**.*

*DV Are sharks that tenacious in a situation like the one presented in **The Shallows**?*

*GB Sharks can be very tenacious if the opportunity offered to them is especially enticing. They're hungry and when sharks get together in numbers there is an element of competition. I'm sure Blake Lively has had the same thing occur in bars with packs of guys hanging around her!*

*DV Let's talk about **47 Meters Down**.*

*GB I didn't see that movie, only the trailers.*

*DV I have to be honest with you, George—I hated this movie. The sharks were great, but the acting was horrible.*

*GB The first **Jaws** movie had Robert Shaw, who stole the show. And that's why **Jaws** was so successful—it featured actors who were good. Even the secondary performances were well done, such as the mayor of Amity. His reaction and how he tried to keep the shark attack under cover, that is spot-on in what you see in real shark attack situations. The actor, Murray Hamilton, played it right. The problem with most shark movies is they use C-grade actors, so even if the plot is reasonably compelling, they still have that problem.*

*DV Next up is **Open Water**.*

*GB That one was more compelling to me because I understood the circumstances that were going on. I remember the actual incident occurring off Australia. I thought that one was played well based on what it feels like to be left out alone like that and the hopelessness of being abandoned at sea. It certainly struck me, as someone who has spent a lot of time at sea, because I have thought about that many times: What happens if I go overboard? So I guess I had a personal tie to it. But I thought **Open Water** had much better acting and a better storyline because it emphasized the predicament more than the sharks. They used sharks in the context of a greater storyline, and under those circumstances it was effective and more accurately played. I think that when sharks are the main characters of a movie, that's when things tend to go downhill. When you put them in as part of the overall picture, it's easier to produce a more compelling movie.*

*DV Have you ever been approached to be an advisor on a shark movie?*

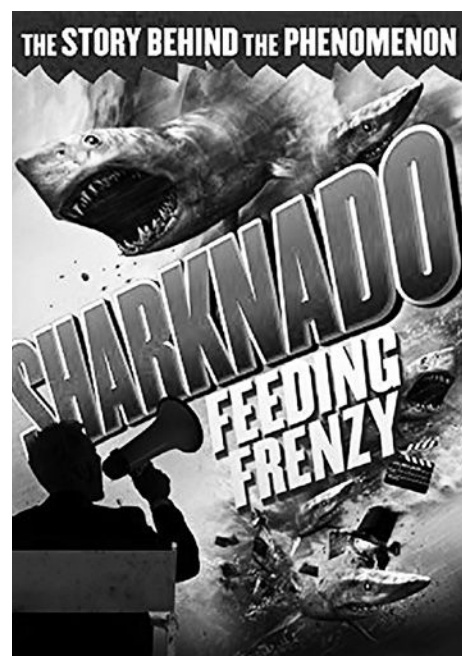
*GB Actually, I was approached by the producers of **Deep Blue Sea**, and I said no thank you after hearing what they were planning on doing.*

*DV What would you demand to take a job like that?*

*GB I'd have to at least have some guarantee that if I'm there to advise on, say, credibility of sharks that my advice would be honored on some level. I wouldn't want my name associated with anything that was overtly wrong with the characterization of sharks. That would be the main thing.*

*DV You're a big advocate of shark conservancy. Please explain why sharks are a good thing.*

*GB The obvious answer that any biologist would give you is that it doesn't matter if it's a shark or a mosquito or a tick—everything has its place. Sharks, of course, have a unique kind of place in that they are one of the top predators of the sea, so they hold a position that is perhaps more visible than other things. Sharks are what are known as charismatic megafauna, which are those animals that have captured the imagination of the public and are easier to work on from a conservation standpoint. Even if we consider them vil-*



*lains, they are on our radar screen. I think it's our job as biologists to remind people that sharks aren't the man-eaters we think they are and that they are really cool because they are in a particular position within the ecosystem. One thing we know is that an ecosystem without sharks would be very different.*

*DV In what ways do shark movies influence international efforts to protect shark populations?*

*GB I'd say they are mostly negative. The reason being that the common denominator in most of these movies is the vilification of sharks. It's easy to go to that well over and over again because it's that stereotype that draws people. You can't have pro wrestling unless you have a match with a good guy and a bad guy. The villain has to defeat the hero every now and then to keep people coming back. It's the same with sharks. The shark has to win some battles to make people come back, although in the end inevitably it's the human hero who wins.*

*DV Lastly, what would you like our readers to know about sharks that they may not?*

*GB I think probably the most important thing to know about sharks right now is that their populations are in decline throughout much of the world, primarily the result of over-fishing and habitat loss. Because sharks are efficient predators, they are easy to capture on baited hooks. Whether that hook is intended for a tuna or something else, sharks are going to find it. And because their flesh is not considered especially edible, they are often discarded. Of course, there is a market for shark fins in Asia, where they are a high-priced specialty item. So sharks have a double whammy on them. Even if they aren't the intended catch, they are worth catching because the fins are worth something. So over-fishing is a problem internationally and there need to be international accords to solve this problem. ☘*



## Rob Freese's DRIVE-IN DELIRIUM!

VCI ENTERTAINMENT/  
MVD VISUAL

(2-disc Blu-ray + DVD \$29.98 each) 1/18

### THE AFTERMATH (1982) 88 1/2

D: Steve Barkett. Steve Barkett, Sid Haig, Lynne Margulies, Christopher Barkett, Forrest J Ackerman. 96 mins.

Returning from a long space mission, macho astronaut Newman (Barkett) and his crew find the world decimated by nuclear war. They fight bands of psychotic mutants and come up against the evil Cutter (Haig) and his group of bloodthirsty mercenaries. Newman vows to protect a young boy named Chris (Barkett, Son of Steve) when The Curator (Ackerman) admits he won't be around much longer to raise the war orphan. Newman also meets and falls in love with Sarah (Margulies), a wasteland woman who escaped Cutter's clutches. Tensions build until Cutter goes berserk and Newman turns *my loco*, seeking vengeance against the evildoer and his greasy henchmen. **The Aftermath** is an effective low-budget post-apoc entry that flaunts some great Don (**The Alien Factor**) Dohler-style forced perspective shots as well as '80s-era gore like exploding heads, severed limbs and juicy gunshot wounds. (The production also sports some fantastic matte paintings of a nuclear war-ravaged L.A.) The flick is basically an "everyman's" fantasy, with writer-director-producer-star Barkett blasting bare-chested into the action, bedding down the damsel in distress while taking on an army of bad guys singlehandedly. It's a family affair as Steve puts both his son and daughter in the action, as well as FX ace Jim Danforth as a fellow astronaut and the late Eric Caidin as an expired broadcaster. Barkett has had a nice career in films, starting as an actor for Ted Mikels in **The Corpse Grinders** and moving on to roles in front of as well as behind the camera for Fred Olen Ray and Jim Wynorski. **The Aftermath** gained a little notoriety when it found its way onto the DPP Section 3 List during the U.K.'s silly Video Nasties era. This is a rather charming little time machine back to when independent films were made with a lot more heart and real creativity. VCI packs its 2k presentation with a Barkett commentary, interviews, trailers, stills and more. Although I've read plenty about this film over the years, this was the first time I've had the opportunity to view it. I hate that I didn't catch this film on VHS back when I was 15 and gorging on all the wonderful flicks I was discovering for the first time. Definitely worth a watch.

### THE TWILIGHT PEOPLE (1972) 88

D: Eddie Romero. John Ashley, Pat Woodell, Jan Merlin, Charles Macaulay, Pam Grier, Eddie Garcia. 80 mins.

American Good Guy Matt Farrell (Ashley) is abducted while scuba diving and taken to the secret island fortress of diabolical Dr. Gordon (Macaulay). Gordon is trying to create a race of supermen by melding humans with animals, and he needs the superior minds of guys like Farrell and Juan Pereira (Garcia) to inject into his wild "manimals" to heighten their intelligence because, it turns out, mixing men with wild animals is a tremendously horrible idea. Neva Gordon (Woodell) eventually realizes her father has been kind of a nut since her mother died (what's that lurking just beyond the trees?) and she falls hard for Farrell, who thwarts her suicide attempt and turns it into a make-out session. This flick stretches five minutes of plot and story over 80 minutes of runtime. Not once does Ashley's hair get messed up while on the run. Woodell is fetching as the big-hearted daughter, while Merlin is obviously having fun as his character constantly tries to steer the plot more toward **The Most Dangerous Game** material. Garcia is wasted in what is basically a quick cameo (he must have owed Romero a favor). All the Play-Doh-faced manimals are jerks, with Grier receiving the least amount of beauty-altering makeup as the perpetually screeching Panther Woman Ayesa, the jerkier one of the bunch. (Cats are jerks?) This was on the first double bill for Larry Woolner's Dimension Pictures, which helped to kick-start a truly fantastic run for the much-beloved distribution company that folded way too soon. **The Twilight People** is a fun movie but not nearly as much fun as Romero and Ashley's earlier **Blood Island** films released by Hemisphere Pictures. (I do wonder if Ashley's Matt Farrell here was related to his Jim Farrell character from **Brides of Blood**.) The flick was made for drive-ins, where you could play kissy face with your date during the talky parts. VCI offers up this 2k restoration with such extras as an entertaining and informative commentary by Davids Del Valle and Decoteau, a video interview with the late Romero, the incredible original theatrical trailer and TV spots. Essential viewing for fans of Filipino horror flicks and anyone interested in checking out what the kids were watching at the old ozoner over the summer of '72.

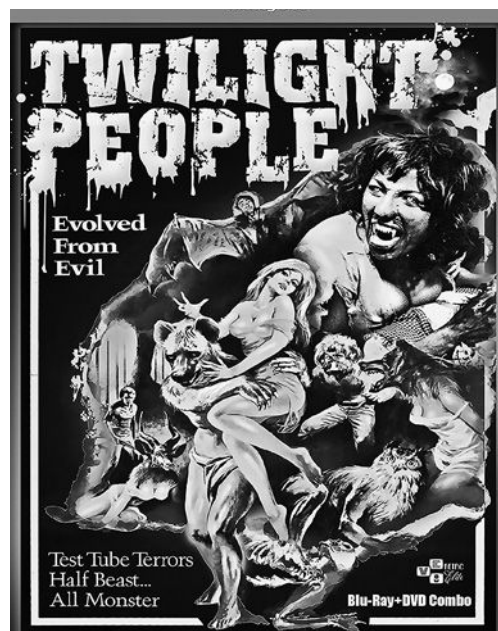
### VINEGAR SYNDROME

(2-disc Blu-ray + DVD \$32.98) 1/18

### LUCIFER'S WOMEN (1974) 88

D: Paul Aratow. Larry Hankin, Jane Brunel-Cohen, Paul Thomas, Norman Pierce, Clair Dia. 91 mins.

Author John Wainwright (Hankin) has written a book about the reincarnation of Svengali and even claims to be the vessel for which the famed fictional (?) character has chosen for his return. Sir Steven Philips (Pierce), his publisher, prac-



tices black magic and Satanism. When Wainwright falls for bored-looking sorta stripper Trilby (Brunel-Cohen), Sir Steven tells the author he needs her for a sacrificial satanic sex ritual to ensure that he and his coven receive eternal life, or some dang thing. The motivations of the characters are thin to nonexistent at best. Thomas plays Roland, a coke-snorting jerk who owns the club where Trilby performs as the world's least enthusiastic stripper. Characters sit around talking a lot, mostly about "chasing kicks" and "making it" and "turning on." Trilby reads underground sex comics and experiments with lesbianism before agreeing to an awkward, hairy and not very sexy three-way with her roommate and Roland. The ending moments make no real sense and I wondered if it was all a dream. I get it, in '74 this was a "heavy trip," mixing sex and nudity with Satanism, which was making headlines at the time. (Anton LaVay, founder of the Church of Satan, was a technical advisor for the black mass scenes.) It's kinky and it's kooky, but it's also an incomprehensible mess that will make your head ache. Until now this version has been unseen except for a brief theatrical run. It has never been available on home-video and was considered lost. Scenes existed only in a patched-up, reworked version from Al Adamson and Sam Sherman under the title **Doctor Dracula**, which was re-edited with a bunch of new actors and sold to TV. For years people have been complaining about how awful the **Doctor Dracula** version is, but for me that version is a masterpiece compared to this original "lost" version. Extras include both versions, a brand-new Sam Sherman commentary on the **Doctor Dracula** cut, which delves into how I-IP acquired the original film and how it was altered, an interview with Paul Thomas, trailer, an essay by Samm Deigham and a **Lucifer's Women/Doctor Dracula** reversible cover. If you're a fan who's been waiting for the uncut **Lucifer's Women** to finally be released to home-video, your dark day of joyous hellfire has at last arrived. 8

## Dan Cziraky's MSTIE MADNESS!

### MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER 3000: SEASON 11 (2017) 888

D: Various. Felicia Day, Patton Oswalt, Jonah Ray, Baron Vaughn, Hampton Yount, Rebecca Hanson, Joel Hodgson. 1333 mins. (Shout! Factory 8-disc \$59.95) 4/18

Seventeen years after its final episode aired on the Sci-Fi Channel (Syfy today), **Mystery Science Theater 3000** returned, this time on Netflix, after a massive Kickstarter campaign (launched by original show creator Joel Hodgson) drew enough to fund 14 episodes. The format is mostly the same, as Gizmonics Institute employee Jonah Heston (Ray) is trapped on the dark side of the moon by the evil, profit-obsessed mad scientist Kinga Forrester (Day) and her devoted henchman TV's Son of TV's Frank, aka Max (Oswalt). Transported to the Satellite of Love via the Umbilicis, Forrester revives her family's "most famous experiment" and forces Jonah to watch cheesy movies in an effort to drive him insane and rule the world. Jonah gets through the films with the help of his wisecracking robot pals, Tom Servo (Vaughn), Crow (Yount), and Gypsy (Hanson). Also back are the Invention Exchanges, while Kinga attempts to perfect Kinga-Vision, a liquid-based video technology that's woefully low-tech.

Disc 1: Experiment #1101: **Reptilicus** (1961). Bumbling Danish scientists discover a frozen piece of a dinosaur's tail, dig it up, re-grow it to full size, and accidentally bring it back to life as a bad, acid-spewing Muppet. This episode sets up the whole premise and features Hodgson as Ardy, the "movie in the hole!" technician. We're also introduced to the Moon 13 house band, the Skeleton Crew, that plays the musical interludes (based on past **MST3K** songs) during the identification breaks narrated by Max.

Experiment #1102: **Cry Wilderness** (1987). An annoying boy at a boarding school is alerted by his buddy Bigfoot that his forest ranger father is in peril, so he ditches school and travels to the woods to save him—by getting into all sorts of trouble. Local livestock are being killed by something, so Bigfoot is being blamed and the locals hire a big game hunter to kill it. During the host bumpers, Grandma Pearl (Mary Jo Pehl), Brain Guy (Bill Corbett), and Professor Bobo (Kevin Murphy) stop by Moon 13 in Pearl's Rocket Van on their way to a space casino. The Bigfoot suit used in the film is just dreadful and doesn't even have gloves for the actor's hands (!).

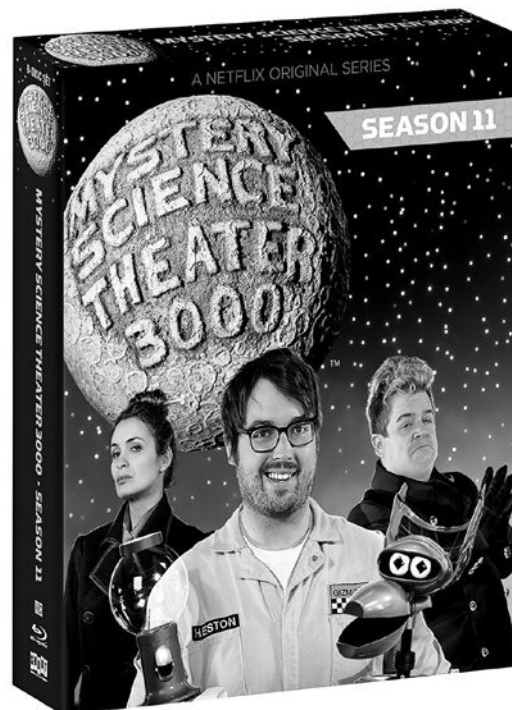
Disc 2: Experiment #1103: **The Time Travelers** (1964). Scientists mucking about with time travel accidentally create a portal that takes them and a janitor to a barren, mutant-inhabited Earth a hundred years in the future. The sci-fi trappings of the story are pretty low-tech, and we'd soon see better effects (and stories) on TV shows like **Time Tunnel**. During a break, future scientist Dr. Varno and Larry the Janitor (Hodgson) visit the SOL on Rocket Number 9.

Experiment #1104: **Avalanche** (1978). Rock Hudson and Mia Farrow try to rekindle their failed marriage at Rock's newly opened winter resort, where he continues to ignore warnings of an impending avalanche—right up until it hits and wipes out the resort! They also have to deal with Rock's cougar mom. Space magician Neville La Roy (Neil Patrick Harris), Kinga's online boyfriend, visits Moon 13, where he and Kinga sing "Our Love Is on Wings (You Can't See)."

Disc 3: Experiment 1105: **The Beast of Hollow Mountain** (1956). An American cowboy living in Mexico discovers his cattle are disappearing, so he immediately blames a rival Mexican cattle baron. He also starts macking on his rival's fiancée. After an interminably long period of time and lots of comic relief with a little Mexican boy and his walking-stereotype alcoholic father, they finally discover the culprit is a stop-motion dinosaur that resembles a 3rd grader's Play-Doh project.

Experiment 1106: **Starcrash** (1978). Hammer Films horror babe Caroline Munro stars as an outlaw smuggler hired by Emperor of the Galaxy Christopher Plummer to rescue his son (David Hasselhoff) and destroy a secret weapon owned by the evil Count Zarth Arn (Munro's **Last Horror Star** costar Joe Spinell). Marjoe Gortner is Munro's alien copilot, and there's a robot with a Southern accent for no apparent reason. The film inspires Crow's new screenplay: **World War Space**. Venture capitalist Freak Masterstroke (Jerry Seinfeld) visits Moon 13 and tells Kinga why all of her invention ideas stink. Favorite riffs: "Crappy effects are powerless against me!" and "That's the thing about this movie: it's not afraid to take its time to aggravate you."

Disc 4: Experiment #1107: **The Land That Time Forgot** (1974). A German U-boat sinks a British ship during WW I and takes the survivors on board. Doug McClure and the other survivors wrest control of the ship from its prissy captain, but the German crew foils them. The off-course submarine takes them to the unknown continent of Caprona, where they find oversized dinosaur puppets and Neanderthals. Favorite riff (referring to a group of Neanderthals): "It's Crosby, Crosby, Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young."

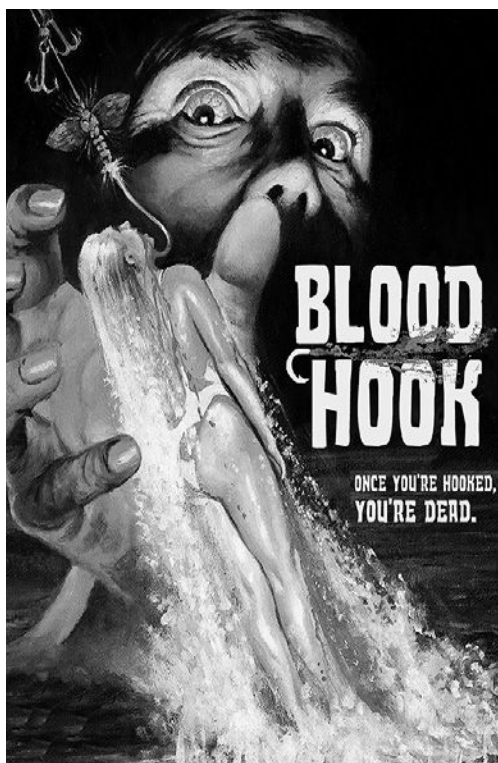


Experiment #1108: **The Loves of Hercules** (1960). Herc (Mickey Hargitay) gets involved in palace intrigues in the nation of Ecalia after discovering his wife has been murdered and instantly forgetting her once he sees Jayne Mansfield. A new robot, M. Waverly, invades Jonah and the 'bots' girly Hercules party. (May he rest in peace.) Fave riff: "I'm gonna give you and your dungeon the worst Yelp review ever! I was barely flogged!"

Disc 5: Experiment #1109: **Yongary, Monster from the Deep** (1967). Yongary, a prehistoric fire-breathing reptile, does the monster mash through Korea on its way to Seoul. Favorite riff (as people flee from the monster): "Everyone grab one thing. Doesn't matter what the thing is! Just take it!"

Experiment #1110: **Wizards of the Lost Kingdom** (1985). In a really cheap fantasy kingdom, a wizard's annoying son and has-been warrior Bo Svenson battle an evil wizard and his treacherous lover. Jonah explaining to the 'bots how Kor (Svenson) got the name "conqueror" and explanations for Kor's face after killing four guys is priceless. Favorite riff: "By the power of numbskull!"

Disc 6: Experiment #1111: **Wizards of the Lost Kingdom II** (1989). In-name-only sequel to the previous movie, in which three kingdoms have been overtaken by three evil lords and only a horny teenage boy with magical powers can restore peace to the land. David Carradine and Sid Haig (dressed as a Skeksis from **The Dark Crystal**) stop by long enough to collect paychecks and embarrass themselves. Grandma Pearl and crew visit and—Kinga's getting married! Favorite riff: "I'm forming a Stockholm Syndrome situation with David Carradine's legs."



Experiment #1112: **Carnival Magic** (1981). Clairvoyant magician Markov and his talking chimp Alexander become a sensation at the most depressing, melancholy carnival since **Carnival of Souls**. Kinga announces her wedding—to Jonah. P.T. Mindslap (Mark Hamill) and the Great Space Circus Show visit, but Kinga and Max chase him off. Associate producer Matt McGinnis is seen as Matt Claude Van Damme for a brief instant in a very weird sequence. Favorite riff: “Did he just pitch them a **Planet of the Apes** sequel?”

Disc 7: Experiment #1113: **The Christmas That Almost Wasn't** (1966). A dour Santa is being kicked out of his North Pole home/workshop by villainous landlord Rossano Brazzi right before Christmas. Down-on-his-luck lawyer Paul Tripp gets him a job as a department store Santa to earn the money to pay his overdue rent bill. On Moon 13, Kinga still plans to marry Jonah, but Pearl's clone Synthia (Hanson) isn't helping. Favorite riff (referring to Santa's workshop): “You can always tell when a building used to be an IHOP.”

Experiment #1114: **At the Earth's Core** (1976). Victorian scientist Peter Cushing and assistant Doug McClure take a test run in their Iron Mole drilling machine but end up in a strange underground world where prehistoric bird people control hotties like Caroline Munro for slaves—and snacks. Jonah introduces Gupwler, basically a robot version of **The Muppet Show's** Rowlf. Kinga turns to the Observer Hive Mind Manager to provide a crowd for her wedding, since no one has

RSVP'd. Doug McClure (Joel McHale) visits and offers Max some romantic advice. As the wedding draws near, Pearl, Bobo and Brain Guy appear to give their blessing to Jonah and Kinga's nuptials (Pearl even sings a few bars of “When Loving Lovers Love”), but in the midst of the ceremony, Max has other plans.

Disc 8: **A Good Test Case: We Brought Back MST3K**. A 73-minute feature-length documentary provides an insider's look at the creation of Season 11 and its debut on Netflix. New interviews with Hodgson, Ray, Day, Oswalt and many others supply the lowdown on the Kickstarter campaign, the search for new talent, and the guest stars appearing in the triumphant return of everyone's favorite “cowtown puppet show.”

The new **Mystery Science Theater 3000** is definitely a bit more of a departure than when the series moved from Comedy Central to Sci-Fi Channel after Season 7. A new set of mad scientists with a new lair and a new Satellite of Love crew (as well as a significant revamp of Gypsy) have really refreshed the show. The riffing is a bit uneven, as it's sometimes rapid-fire and at other times there are odd pauses. The format is still 90-minutes per episode, which means the movies are still subject to trimming (two songs were cut from **Reptilicus**, as well as David Carradine fighting a monster in **Wizards of the Lost Kingdom II**). While the writing is pretty much up to the standards of the classic series, the voice performances during the theater segments are sometimes disappointing. Ray, Yount, and Vaughn's voices are so similar in timbre that it's often difficult to figure out who's saying what. Gypsy now pops into the theater twice per film, and Tom Servo can fly via his hoverskirt (but only in the theater). The continuity to previous incarnations of the show are unclear, as the last time we saw the SOL crew they were all on Earth, living in a one-bedroom garden apartment with Mike Nelson—and the SOL itself had burned up upon re-entering Earth's atmosphere! Also, since Dr. Clayton Forrester (Trace Beaulieu) reverted to a Star Baby at the end of Season 7, who apparently died due to Pearl's neglect, just *when* did he have a chance to father a daughter?! However, if all of this is a major concern for you, then just repeat to yourself, “It's just a show, I should really just relax.”

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## PRE-MSTIE MADNESS!

### **BLOOD HOOK** (1986) 88

D: James Mallon. Mark Jacobs, Lisa Todd, Patrick Danz, Sarah Hauser, Christopher Whiting, Don Winters. 85 mins. (Vinegar Syndrome Blu-ray \$32.98) 5/18

“This ain't no Japanese monster movie,” insists a character in **Blood Hook**, and we have to agree. Fact is, future **Mystery Science Theater 3000** producer Jim Mallon's debut feature is, perhaps not surprisingly, less a horror flick than a deadpan comedy of (mostly ill) manners. The pic follows a band of five young folks and a typically crass family of Ugly American vacationers (“Katharine Hepburn never had to put up with what *I* have to,” ditz Mom moans re slob Dad) into the turbulent waters of Muskie, Wisconsin, where an unknown maniac has been baiting the title implement for human prey. There are a number of inspired encounters between the innocent interlopers and several local eccentrics, including a paranoid 'Nam vet who's convinced the murders are part of a larger conspiracy. Todd is especially deft as Ann, the psychobabbling squeeze of Peter (Jacobs), the unlikely hero who finally succeeds, through an inventive musical hook, in unmasking the killer. Fairly sparse on gore save for one victim-gutting scene, **Blood Hook** is fun most of the way, running out of creative steam only during its protracted last-reel punch line. Future **MST3K** robot riffer Kevin Murphy receives a key grip credit. As usual, Vinegar Syndrome goes overboard piling on the extras with fresh interviews with auteur Mallon, actress Todd, and FX artist Jim Smithers, along with an audio interview with editor/cinematographer Marsha Kahm, a still gallery, original theatrical trailer and more. 8

—*The Phantom*





## Scott Voisin's CHARACTER KINGS EDDIE DEEZEN A NERD FOR ALL SEASONS

Often recognized as filmdom's original nerd, comic actor Eddie Deezen was an ubiquitous presence on drive-in screens and in video stores in the '70s and '80s. After kicking off to a high-profile start in **Grease** and Steven Spielberg's **1941**, he became the go-to geek in scores of comedies and TV shows. Later, Eddie solidified his rep as a reliable voice actor on such popular animated series as **Dexter's Laboratory** and **Johnny Bravo** along with countless video games before making a major movie return in Robert Zemeckis' **The Polar Express** and even serving as the focus of the fan film **I Love Eddie Deezen**. Today, Eddie continues his prolific voice work and writes for several pop-culture blogs and sites. Scott Voisin caught up with the Clown Prince of Character Kings for the following career-spanning conversation.

**SCOTT VOISIN** How did you become interested in acting?

**EDDIE DEEZEN** I was always the class clown and a misfit in school. I loved being a comedian—I had my little shtick and I knew I could make a lot of people laugh. I was too odd and too strange to fit in the “real world,” so I embraced performing and have loved doing it since day one. I originally wanted to be a standup comedian but I didn't enjoy or have the stomach for it, so I turned to acting.

**SV** Did you ever have any professional training?

**ED** I took a few lessons from a lady named Lurene Tuttle, who was an actress back in the day on a '60s TV show called **Julia**. I recall one of our exercises was doing the Abbott and Costello routine “Who's on First?” I also took a few lessons with another woman named Anna Stiles. They were both very nice ladies, but I honestly didn't learn much about acting from them. I studied comedians like Jerry Lewis, Harpo Marx, Tim Conway, Curly Howard and Bob Denver. That was my basic training.

**SV** Did you ever have to do any day jobs to pay the bills while you were pursuing your acting career?

**ED** Not really. Luckily, my dad had a college fund saved up for me, but I hated school and didn't want to go to college, so he sent me \$400 a month to help with my bills. It sounds like a small amount now, but in 1975 and

'76, that was enough money to pay my rent and buy groceries.

**SV** Your first movie was **Grease**. What are some memories you have of getting the job and making the film?

**ED** Well, I used to have a crummy agent named Regina. She was terrible at her job but she *did* get me the **Grease** audition, so I guess I owe her for that one! I dressed up in a suit, globbed some Brylcreem in my hair and went to Paramount for a huge cattle call where I sat in a large room filled with other actors. All the guys wore leather jackets and looked like Fonzie, and all the girls were wearing poodle skirts. I seemed to be the only geeky, nerdy type there. When I went in to audition, three guys were there: Joel Thurm, the casting director, Allan Carr, the producer, and Randal Kleiser, the director. As I read my lines, I saw them nudging each other and smiling. I knew I had done pretty well and, luckily, I got the role. John Travolta was the nicest guy ever and always called me “buddy.” Whenever he saw me, he'd shake my hand and say, “Hi, buddy,” and sometimes he'd ask, “Are you okay, buddy?” At the time, he was a huge TV star but he went out of his way to be very friendly to me. I only met Olivia Newton-John once during filming when we hijacked a car together on the Paramount lot. Another guy was driving as she sat in the front seat and I was in the back. When our ride came to an end, she turned to me and said, “You're funny.” That was the first and last time we talked until I saw her in Las Vegas in 2016. She was performing and called me to the stage and introduced me to the audience. We got to reunite after her show, and she was absolutely lovely. I was chauffeured home each night with Sid Caesar, but the driver instructed me not to speak unless Mr. Caesar spoke to me, so I always sat quietly in the backseat. I felt it was a bit strange that I couldn't talk to him, but it wasn't that big of a deal. Before **Grease**, I used to take the bus home, so I was just grateful Paramount was giving me a ride.

**SV** Did the success of the movie open some doors for you in Hollywood?

**ED** Yes, I think so, but I don't remember getting a job specifically because of the movie. However, as an actor, **Grease** is a nice credit to have on your resume, so I'm sure it helped.

**SV** This year marks the 40th anniversary of **Grease**. Why do you think the film has had such staying power? Did you have any idea at the time that it would be—and continue to be—such a beloved movie?

**ED** All new actors probably think their first film will be a hit, but they don't realize that a majority of movies bomb or vanish or are quickly forgotten. Cable and videos and DVDs help keep them alive, but **Grease** came out before any of those things. I can't imagine anyone at the time thought it would become an immortal film like



Eddie Deezen: The Nerd's the Word

**The Wizard of Oz** or **Jaws** or **Star Wars**, but that's what happened. One factor is obviously the music—the soundtrack is wonderful—but the chemistry of the cast was important, too, and everyone played their roles well. John Travolta had scored the year before with **Saturday Night Fever**, and it's very rare for any actor or actress to have back-to-back hits of that magnitude. **Grease** is a “feel good” movie, and it's hard not to be happier while watching it.

**SV** **Grease 2** was pretty maligned when it came out but seems to have gained some appreciation over the years. What are your thoughts on it?

**ED** Personally, I never liked **Grease 2**. I got cut out of both films to a large degree, but at least I had two nice scenes in the original, and I love the soundtrack. I get nothing out of **Grease 2** but I did love Maxwell Caulfield and Michelle Pfeiffer. Both of them were very nice.

**SV** The same year that **Grease** came out, you were in Robert Zemeckis' directorial debut, **I Wanna Hold Your Hand**. How did you get involved and what was it like making it?

**ED** I had nine auditions for **I Wanna Hold Your Hand**, which is my all-time record. That was probably my best role ever and I was basically playing myself, a crazed Beatles nut. Steven Spielberg was on the set, which is where I first met him. He was a very nice and wonderful guy. I loved Bob Zemeckis and his co-writer, Bob Gale, from the beginning. In my book, Zemeckis is the greatest and my all-time favorite director.

**SV** You were in Spielberg's **1941**, which was written by Zemeckis and Gale. Did your previous work with them on **I Wanna Hold Your Hand** help you get cast or did you have to earn the role on your own?

**“At that point, I realized, ‘I just threw up in Steven Spielberg’s toilet!’ To this day, it’s still one of the highlights of my career.”**

**Eddie Deezen  
on 1941**

**ED** Since they knew me already, I was just written into **1941**. They originally wanted Jackie Gleason and Art Carney for the two guys on the ferris wheel, but I heard Jackie was angry at Art and they turned it down. Luckily, Murray Hamilton and I got the parts.

**SV** What are some of the memories you have of making the movie?

**ED** I went to my coolest lunch ever on **1941**. I was on the set one day and Steven turned to me and said, “Eddie, do you want to go to lunch with us?” The “us” turned out to be Steven, John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd. We went to the studio commissary, and it was a pretty surreal experience for me, a 22-year-old kid. I never said a word and sat there like a stuffed idiot as Steven, John and Dan chatted. After we finished, I realized I had no money to pay, but thankfully Steven picked up the tab. I loved John. He was a very kind guy and was always very nice to me. I also threw up in Steven’s toilet! He was whipping Murray and I around on the ferris wheel one day and I got motion sick. Steven’s secretary took me to his office so I could lie down, but at one point, I crawled into the bathroom and vomited. At that point, I realized, “I just threw up in Steven Spielberg’s toilet!” To this day, it’s still one of the highlights of my career.

**SV** The film **Midnight Madness** has amassed something of a cult following since its release, primarily because it featured a lot of actors at the beginning of their careers, like Michael J. Fox, David Naughton, Stephen Furst and Paul Reubens.

**ED** Michael J. Fox and I would have lunch together and talk about **The Twilight Zone**, a show we both loved. We’d also play handball against a brick wall at Disney Studios. Paul Reubens and I became immediate friends. He wasn’t Pee-Wee Herman yet but he was a wonderful guy and I loved him.

**SV** What was it like making **WarGames**?

**ED** I shot my scene in **WarGames** with Marty Brest as the director. I kept screwing up my lines and he got me cue cards to read from. Marty was fired from the film because the studio didn’t like the dailies they were

seeing, so he was replaced by John Badham. Maury Chaykin was great to work with. It was his idea to call me “Mr. Potato Head” in the scene, and he was a total pro. I was driven to the set with Matthew Broderick, and his dad, James Broderick, had just recently died. I remember Matthew telling me about his dad as we were riding in the car. I looked at him and he had tears in his eyes. He was such a nice guy.

**SV** You’ve also guest-starred on such TV series as **The Facts of Life**, **Magnum P.I.** and **The Fall Guy**. Is it difficult coming to work on a show with an established cast and crew?

**ED** All of the shows I’ve guest-starred on, every one was very nice to me. It can be awkward going in with an established cast and crew, but in my experiences those people were great and made me feel welcome. Tom Selleck was the nicest guy ever! He called me, “The new Lon Chaney.” One night, he invited some people—including me—to his hotel room to watch a baseball game. He ordered spaghetti dinners for all of us and made the salad himself. He was a very cool guy.

**SV** According to your Wikipedia page, you had a recurring role on **Punky Brewster** but left the series because you had trouble remembering your lines. Is that true?

**ED** I was actually fired from that series. All of the people on the show were very nice, and I made a bundle of money. NBC paid me very well, but I was still unhappy and didn’t like working on it. I’ve always had a hard time remembering lines, and there were constant script changes. They would slide different colored pages under your dressing room door whenever they revised the lines and it was extremely hard for me to keep up with. I went to London the same day my manager called to tell me I was fired and I was actually happy and relieved. I had a very fun trip.

**SV** During the ‘80s, you seemed to get typecast as “the nerd.” Did this bother you or was it all about just finding the next job no matter what the role?

**ED** It never bothered me at all. To be honest, I am not super-talented or versatile. I have my own little shtick, my own niche. Most everyone knows that.

**SV** You’ve done several films with director Fred Olen Ray. What is it about him that keeps you coming back for more?

**ED** I love Fred, he’s a marvelous director, especially with comedy. I did three films with him—the most of any director—and he’s just a great guy. On **Mob Boss**, I got to work with Morgan Fairchild. We had a scene where we make out, and before filming, she came to me and said, “Do you want to rehearse?” Ummm, yes, please! So I got to practice making out with Morgan before



our scene where we make out. I was in heaven! Not only is she a great kisser, she’s also a marvelous comedienne. She’s a doll and I loved working with her.

**SV** In addition to film, you’re also a sought-after voiceover artist. Do you prefer working on-screen or off?

**ED** I like voiceover work because I have a hard time memorizing dialogue. With voiceovers, you just read your lines and it’s a piece of cake. But if I had to choose, I prefer acting on-camera.

**SV** Almost 30 years after **I Wanna Hold Your Hand** and **1941**, you reunited with Robert Zemeckis for **The Polar Express**. Did he offer you the role or did you have to audition?

**ED** I had to do a test for **The Polar Express** but luckily I got the role. I always wanted to do a Christmas film, and shooting that movie was an absolute joy. I love Bob Zemeckis, and Tom Hanks was—and still is—my favorite movie star. Every week, Tom would treat everyone to a big catered spread of deli food from Langer’s Deli—pastrami, corned beef, pickles, potato salad—and he’d also buy everyone a lottery ticket. He was a very kind man. He knew I was a big baseball fan, and after filming wrapped, he took me to three games at Dodger Stadium. He was totally unpretentious and I loved him very much. Every day on the set with Tom, I could ask him any questions and he would graciously answer them. He couldn’t have been nicer to me.

**SV** You were the subject of a short, **I Love Eddie Deezen**. How did that come about?

**ED** I was friends with an amazingly talented lady, Sherry Mattson. She wrote, directed and starred in the film and hired me to be in it. It was her project all the way, and I just make an appearance at the end.

**"We had a scene where we make out, and before filming, she came to me and said, 'Do you want to rehearse?' Ummm, yes, please!"**

**Eddie Deezen on  
Morgan Fairchild, *Mob Boss***

*SV What traits does a good director have that gets the best out of you as an actor?*

*ED* A good director is a good communicator. All the great directors I've worked with knew me and understood me, and they were friendly. Whether they tell me exactly what to do or give me freedom to ad-lib stuff, I can work either way. All I ask is that they don't be a jerk. Luckily, pretty much every director I've worked with has been very good. Out of hundreds, I've only had two or three real turkeys.

*SV When you get a role, is there a process you go through to create the character?*

*ED* No, not really. I just play my usual "Eddie Deezen" character. It's very second nature to me.

*SV What frustrates you the most about the business aspects of acting?*

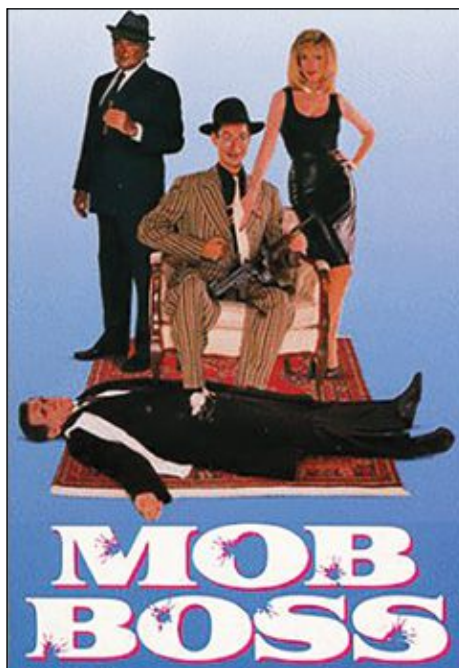
*ED* The competition is tough, but we know what we're getting into when we become actors. The money we make is actually great, so I have no complaints, only gratitude.

*SV You also moonlight as a writer for several media outlets about classic Hollywood stars.*

*ED* I have always been a writer at heart, and I just can't stop. I used to fill up notebooks with my writing, even as a little kid. I write mainly for a website called *Neatorama*, but I've also written for other sites such as *Mental Floss* and *Today I Found Out*. All of my greatest heroes are pretty much from "the old days," such as the Beatles, the Three Stooges, Charlie Chaplin, the Marx Brothers, Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis, George Reeves, Laurel and Hardy and Buster Keaton. They have all brought so much joy and happiness into my life.

*SV You're a frequent guest at autograph shows. Do you meet other celebrities?*

*ED* Yes, I've met so many stars—too many to count!—and they were almost always very nice to me. People like Barbara Eden, Dawn Wells, Bobby Rydell, Jerry Mathers, McKenzie Phillips, Larry Hagman—in my experience, the biggest stars are also the kindest, nicest human beings. There have been a few exceptions, but as a general rule, big stars are great people and I try to see and meet them all at the shows.



*SV Have you had any memorable interactions with your fans?*

*ED* I remember I did a Chiller Theatre show back in 2005. Pete Best, the drummer for the Beatles before Ringo Starr, asked to sit by me because he loved **I Wanna Hold Your Hand**. I was signing beside Adam West and Burt Ward, and Barbara Eden was sitting just a few feet away. I have to admit I was feeling like a real big shot being in such great company. At one point, this geeky-looking nerd came up to my table. He looked like the Nutty Professor with these big buck teeth and glasses, and there were grease stains on his shirt. He said, "I had to come and see you." Never in my life had I felt so superior to another human being. He made me look like Steve McQueen! He was an obvious loser and he was paying me twenty bucks for my autograph. I signed a photo and gave it to him, and this guy motioned me to come closer to him so he could tell me something. Even though the man was pretty pathetic, I try to be very polite to my fans and treat them with respect, so I leaned in, wondering what this nerd could possibly want to say to me. He looked at me and said, "When I was in high school and the other kids wanted to make fun of me, they used to call me 'Eddie Deezen.'" That was a very humbling moment.

*SV What advice would you give aspiring actors?*

*ED* I always use the advice James Garner's dad gave to him: "Give it five years." Take five years and give it all you've got. If you don't do anything, you probably don't have what it takes, but if you have talent, you'll probably get something during that time. Five years is not a huge chunk of a person's life, and if you don't accomplish anything, you still have an even bigger chunk of life still to live. Things are different for everyone, and if acting is important in your heart of hearts, keep on trying no matter how long it takes. ☘

## THE TRUTH FROM THE BOOTH Confessions of a Film Projectionist By Tim Ferrante

All of the theatres in my area were staffed by members of I.A.T.S.E. Local M536. The "M" signified that the Local was mixed. It represented stagehands, projectionists and wardrobe. During the '70s and partly into the '80s, Local M536 was active and vibrant. I was proficient in many of the booths whether they were a sticky-floored grindhouse with wonky equipment or shiny new construction with the latest gear. You'd think that a modern projection room fitted with automated platter systems and xenon lamps would make life easier. Not so.

The Brick Plaza Theatre in Bricktown, NJ, was demolished years ago, but back then it was a 700+ seat single-screen monstrosity. It sat by its lonesome among the stores of the Brick Plaza strip mall and was part of the Music Makers Theatres chain when multiplexing was all the rage. The company was on a mission to add screens either through acquisition or by twinning or tripling existing single screen houses.

The theatre was a big place with an extremely high ceiling. Twinning it meant constructing an enormous soundproof wall down the center of the auditorium. And, much to my amazement, that's exactly what happened. The existing booth was redesigned to accommodate two brand-new Christie platter systems with xenon lamps. They replaced the aging pair of carbon arc lamp projectors that required reel changeovers.

After several weeks of bastardization, opening day arrived. Early that afternoon we were still fine-tuning the projectors when a loud crackling **POP!** scared us half to death. The cause? One of the xenon bulbs had exploded in its lamp house. And you know what else is in the lamp house? The all-important reflector mirror that focuses the light source through the projector's aperture. Without it, the projector becomes a big hunk of useless metal. The bulb had, of course, destroyed the mirror. We had spare bulbs, but mirrors?! Nope. Besides, bulbs almost never exploded...except *that* day. Miraculously, one of the chain's theatres in northern NJ had a spare mirror and a driver was immediately dispatched to fetch the critical part.

Opening night patrons navigated around the carpet layers who were still toiling in the lobby as the newly minted Brick Plaza Twin Cinemas presented its preem engagements, Russ Meyer's **Supervixens** and Bob Clark's **Black Christmas**. Excited filmgoers enjoyed their movies with nary a notion that just hours earlier Murphy's Law had kicked us squarely in the arse. ☘



## They Came From The Basement!

By John Seal

**DR. MABUSE VS. SCOTLAND YARD**  
(1963) B&W 88 1/2

D: Paul May. Peter Van Eyck, Walter Rilla, Dieter Borsche, Werner Peters, Agnes Windeck, Klaus Kinski. 90 mins. (n.i.d.)

Long before Blofeld or Goldfinger were gleams in the eye of Ian Fleming, Dr. Mabuse bestrode the world in all his malevolent glory. Establishing the template for the 20<sup>th</sup> century super-villain, novelist Norbert Jacques' character was massively popular in Germany, his tentacular reach across countries and continents the subject of three Fritz Lang films, a series of early '60s German features, and, of course, Jess Franco's rarely seen **The Vengeance of Dr. Mabuse** (1972). Though the character never really made much of an impression on American audiences, many of the films were dubbed into English and became staples of late-night "Movies 'Til Dawn" programming. Three of these highly entertaining slices of hokum even earned a bare-bones Region 1 DVD release via Retromedia Entertainment a decade or so ago, but it's otherwise been pretty thin pickings for the good doctor on the home-video front.

Left out of Retromedia's collection was one of the series' most enjoyable entries, 1963's **Dr. Mabuse vs. Scotland Yard**. Directed by Bavarian-born Paul May (no relation to Joe May, director of the silent adventure classic **The Silent Tomb**), it was the second of three Mabuse pictures headlined by the Prussian-born actor Peter Van Eyck—who played a different character each time! This time Van Eyck is Major Bill Tern, the English policeman responsible for the arrest of amusingly named baddie George Cockstone (Borsche). After Cockstone escapes his jailers while being transported to prison in Germany, Tern (who still lives at home with his comedy relief busybody of a mother, broadly played by Windeck) is contacted by German copper Vulpus (Peters), who wants the Yard's assistance with the felon's recapture.

Unknown to Tern and Vulpus, Cockstone has been sprung on the orders of the deceased Mabuse, whose spirit now possesses the body of Dr. Pohland (Rilla). Precisely how this miracle has eventuated isn't made clear, but it's nicely represented by a lengthy tracking shot over the film's opening credits, which manages to convey the transigratory effect director May intended Cockstone is ordered to steal the research of Professor Lawrence, whose fruitful experiments in mind control have come to Mabuse's atten-

tion—probably through the pages of a professional publication such as *The Journal of World Domination Studies*. Baby steps, though: Mabuse will first seize control of the British government by kidnapping Princess Diana (!) and utilizing Lawrence's powerful brainwashing machine, which looks like a camera and seizes control of its victims—including one played by Klaus Kinski—via a crude solarization effect. Can Tern put a halt to this nefarious plan?

Though "based on characters created by Norbert Jacques," **Dr. Mabuse vs. Scotland Yard**'s story was actually adapted from Bryan Edgar Wallace's novel **The Device**. This will not surprise those familiar with the *krimis* of the post-war period, dozens of which were derived from the works of Bryan Edgar and his father, **King Kong** co-creator Edgar Wallace. An early example of cross-branding, the combination of the Wallace name and the Mabuse character surely helped at the box office.

Like most early '60s Constantin Film productions, **Dr. Mabuse vs. Scotland Yard** was shot in atmospheric black-and-white and primarily lensed in Germany: other than a few brief establishing shots of London, nothing remotely resembling England appears in the film. A hilarious scene of a character asking for directions to Marble Arch will send anyone who's spent time in central London into gales of laughter, as will a reference to searching "Doncaster Forest."

There are some interesting historical footnotes to the film, suggesting that it was turned around double-quick to add contemporaneous verisimilitude to the proceedings. An atmospheric gallows scene echoes the then-ongoing Parliamentary debate about the death penalty, which would be outlawed within two years after a pair of hangings in 1964. A "great train robbery" also factors into the plot, perhaps an intentional reference to the famous felony of August 8, 1963 (**Dr. Mabuse vs. Scotland Yard** was released in Germany on September 20, 1963).

Sinister Cinema's VHS—since ported over to DVD-R—is derived from a Screen Gems syndication package print. It's dubbed, full-frame, features two gory inserts of a burned head, and is burdened by a soft image that could and should be vastly improved by a digital restoration. Whether or not we'll ever get one in Region 1 remains an open question, though the adventurous recent releases of Arrow Films suggest one possible avenue to DVD or Blu-ray. Who knows: perhaps Dr. Mabuse will train his purloined mind control device on Arrow's Hertfordshire headquarters! 8

### Get'em While They Last!

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See page 54 for details.

## Tim Ferrante's SCORING SESSION

Gwangi Complete! Noir Tunes!  
Italo Giallo and Supermen!  
Jungle Virgins! TV Aliens!

Some notable notes this go-round. Jerome Moross' **The Valley of Gwangi** (1969) has been assembled from composer archives and studio elements resulting in Intrada's complete 72-minute soundtrack CD of the Harryhausen fave. **Gwangi's** (musical) scales disc lists for \$21.99. **Caged! The Dark Side of Max Steiner** is a 3-CD box set featuring his music for seven film noirs that include **Caged** (1950), **The Breaking Point** (1950), **Backfire** (1950) and **Key Largo** (1948). Retailing for \$34.99, it comes via the BYU label from Brigham Young University, where Steiner's papers, scores and career archives are preserved. Stelvio Cipriani's giallo score for **Qualcuno Ha Visto Uccidere** (1973) premed on Italy's Beat Records label. The film was released Stateside in 1975 as **The Student Connection**. The CD is tagged at \$19.95. Same company excavated Ruggero Cini's music for acrobats for its double-feature CD of **I Fantastici 3 Supermen** (1967) and its direct sequel **3 Supermen A Tokio**. A first-time release for both (\$19.95). National Record Store Day this April past yielded a pair of nuggets: Ennio Morricone's **Autopsy (Macchie solari [1975])** is a 2-LP deluxe gatefold on orange marbled wax (Arrow Records \$39.99). Only 900 copies to go around. And Dave Grusin's **The Friends of Eddie Coyle** (1973) brilliant crime music had its first ever release courtesy of the WeWantSounds label. The Grusin must-have gem lists for \$31.99. There's only 300 copies of Quartet Records' Carlo Rustichelli lounge meets military music for **Torpedo Bay** (1963). A superb rarity rescued! Yours for \$19.95. Quartet also gives first-time availability status to Angelo Francesco Lavagnino's **Gungala, La Vergine della Giungla (Virgin of the Jungle [1967])**. The movie never landed on these shores, but you can hear the score for \$19.95. Music Box Records expanded David Shire's **Monkey Shines** (1988) with 25 minutes of never-before-released cues. Only 1000 CDs pressed. Lists for \$19.95. **Ancient Aliens** (2010) is another long-running History Channel series that derives its underscores from production music libraries. Composers Dennis McCarthy, Allan Paul Ett, Kieran Kieley and others are represented on the 78-minute La-La Land Records CD that sells for \$15.95. Michael Giacchino's **BIG** music for **Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom** (2018) roars into stores via Universal's Back Lot Music label. Only \$15.98. See y'all in 90. 8

## SHOCK YOKS!

### BLOODSUCKERS FROM OUTER SPACE (1984) ♂♂♂

D: Glenn Coburn. Thom Meyers, Laura Ellis, Pat Paulsen, Billie Keller, Robert Bradeen. 79 mins. (Vinegar Syndrome \$32.98) 5/18

Seems that formerly fine, upstanding Texas farm folk are transmogrifying into brain-washed bloodsuckers, and only freelance photographer Jeff Rhodes (Meyers) and main squeeze Julie (Ellis) can save mankind. Question is: Should they bother? Coburn's technically crude but frequently funny creature comedy poses this and other pressing queries while taking broad satiric aim at ornery rednecks, lazy lawmen, spaced-out scientists and mad military brass. Some of the performances are rough-edged at best (guest star and erstwhile perennial Presidential candidate Paulsen literally phones in his cameo as our nation's distracted Chief Exec), but Coburn's casual, low-key approach keeps his free-form flick from self-destructing. And dig that crazy country hard rock theme song. Extras on Vinegar Syndrome's new Blu-ray special edition include a commentary track with writer/director Coburn, actor Thom Meyers and cinematographer Chad D. Smith; **34 Years Later**, a 50-minute making-of documentary; **Back to Bloodsucker Town**, a locations featurette; **Bloody Arm Rip 101** special effects featurette, plus a stills gallery and reversible cover artwork

### JEREMIAH'S WOODS (2018) ♂♂♂

D: William Stancik. Alex Wood, J. Gabriel Wagner, Joe Zumba, Bennie Rockum, Marie Jenasee. 84 mins. (Laslo Films) 4/18

When mentally flatlined slacker friends Tucker (Wood) and Shafer (Wagner) head into a patch of nearby woods to find a final resting place for Tucker's deceased dog Murray, they encounter more than they bar-

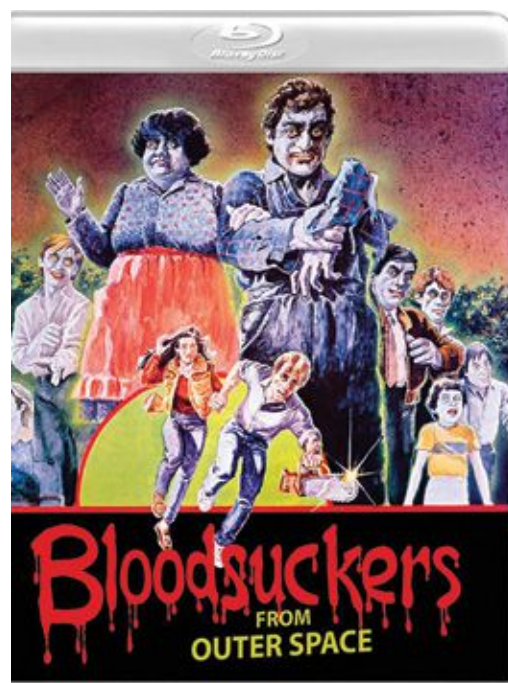
gained in the form of slow-moving, loud-talking forest fiend Jeremiah (Rockum). After recruiting reinforcements of sorts in Tucker's lazy, pervy in-law Fred (Zumba), they unwisely return and rapidly become Jeremiah's captives for an extended variation on the pawnshop basement sequence from **Pulp Fiction**. A graduate of the Rob Zombie School of Filmmaking, writer/director Stancik keeps his slasher spoof, lensed in the wilds of Washington State, consistently amusing via deadpan perfs, inspiredly brain-damaged dialogue, and knowing nods to a wide array of DIY horror tropes, from shaky cameras, grainy footage and random solar flares to mysterious flash forwards and murky flashbacks to our madman's previous crimes. Auteur Stancik also composed a deliberately hideous atonal tune, "I Grow My Tree in You," croaked by our raspy-voiced killer to Casio keyboard accompaniment ear-curdling enough to make Chester N. Turner's **Black Devil Doll from Hell**'s infamous soundtrack sound slick. Withal, **Jeremiah's Woods** makes for a welcome addition to the low-budget frightcom ranks, and we look forward to seeing more from auteur Stancik in future. In the meantime, don't ask why The Shed Is Red!

—*The Phantom*

### KILLER KLOWNS FROM OUTER SPACE (1988) ♂♂♂

D: Stephen Chiodo. Grant Cramer, Suzanne Snyder, John Allen Nelson, John Vernon, Royal Dano, Michael Siegel, Peter Licassi. 90 mins. (Arrow Video \$29.98) 5/18

At a lovers' cove, Mike (Cramer) and Debbie (Snyder) spy a shooting star they believe to be an Earthbound comet. Although reluctant at first, Mike is talked into exploring the nearby woods by his sweet-as-a-sugar-cookie gal. In the woods, they find a giant circus tent. While most people would run for the hills upon this discovery, Mike and Debbie actually venture into the tent for a look around. Inside they locate proof that the tent is actually a space ship, complete with a giant room full of oversized cotton-candy cocoons. (The meaty insides of the cocoons consist of hapless humans, which the Klowns use like juice boxes when they need a quick blood fix.) Hysterical, Mike and Debbie seek help from Deputy Dave (Nelson), who refuses to believe their crazy story and even arrests Mike for disturbing the peace. (It doesn't help that Mike is dating Dave's ex-girlfriend.) Pretty soon, the quiet little college town is under assault by the horde of Klowns as they prowl the streets for human blood. Dave nails his proof of the Klowns' existence when he and Mike discover all the cars at the lovers' cove have been cotton-candyized. (Some of the preferred methods of murder the Klowns employ include psychotic puppet shows, Klown-headed popcorn serpents, custard-pie acid bath, sinister shadow-created creatures, and a boxing-match decapitation, among others.) When the police station is suddenly swamped with calls pertaining



to the cosmic creepers, Sheriff Mooney (Vernon) is convinced the whole town is in on a joke to drive him to retire. After Debbie is taken captive and imprisoned in an outsized balloon, Deputy Dave and Mike team up with the dim-witted Tarenzie Brothers, Rick (Siegel) and Paul (Licassi), to storm the Klowns' ship and save the girl. On the ship, Deputy Dave, Mike and Debbie face off with the 50-foot Klownzilla, while Rick and Paul make time with a couple of Klown babes. **Killer Klowns** is an enjoyably whacked-out, hyperactive creature feature with some top-notch monstroids, plenty of twisted humor and imagination to spare. The Dickies' title song is cool (as was their Klowns-infested video), while Vernon steals the show as the paranoid, teen-hating lawman. (His delivery of lines like "Well, whoopity-goddamnndy-do, what do we have here?" and "I oughta shoot you right now, you red-nosed freak!" is classic.) The film borrows heavily from such beloved horror movies as the original **The Blob** and **Night of the Living Dead**. The movie's major flaw is having all the characters seem generally brain-dead and obnoxious (especially the Tarenzi Brothers), which can make repeat viewings tough. Still, **Killer Klowns from Outer Space** remains a breath of fresh air for evil-extraterrestrial and crazed-clown fanatics, and Mama Chiodo's boys—Stephen, Charles and Edward—deserve credit for crafting a wild and clever winner. Arrow Video goes over the big top with the extras, offering a Chiodo Brothers commentary, interviews with Suzanne Snyder, Grant Cramer, composer John Massarie and original members of The Dickies, who recall the genesis of the theme song, the documentary **The Chiodo Brothers Walk Among Us**, new and vintage featurettes, deleted scenes, audition footage, bloopers, image galleries, original theatrical trailer and more.

—Rob Freese





## THE MISADVENTURES OF BIFFLE AND SHOOSTER (2015) B&W/Color

888

D: Michael Schlesinger. Nick Santa Maria, Will Ryan and A Multitude of Others. 131 mins. (Kino Lorber) 5/18

Michael Schlesinger, the fan-friendly producer who gave us three Larry Blamire cult faves—**Dark and Stormy Night**, **The Lost Skeleton Returns Again** (VS #77) and **Trail of the Screaming Forehead**—wrests control of the writing and directorial reins for this rarified, mega-clever, gag-enhanced homage to the fictional Biffle (Santa Maria) and Shooster (Ryan), a now-obscure second-tier 1930s comedy team in the mode of Wheeler and Woolsey, the Ritz Brothers and other lesser-cherished screen vaudevillians of yore. The film consists of five shorts from a series produced by the equally imaginary Sam Weinberg, each preceded by a title card delineating its production history, showcasing the lads in a series of deliberately familiar situations, even repurposing such hoary routines as Abbott & Costello's *Susquehanna Hat Company*. Schlesinger blends borrowed dialogue with fresh patter (only a scholar could separate the two) and tosses in new tunes written by Santa Maria and performed by the pair, with Ryan providing expert ukelele and guitar accompaniment. **Misadventures** will be most appreciated by students of the genre as arcane references and in-jokes abound. The venture gains in more general appeal as it rolls along, sucking viewers into the team's skewed universe (the two have apparently been at it a while—Ryan, in fact, was a robust 75 at the time of filming). Highlights include **The Biffle Murder Case**, featuring a neat cameo by the ever-welcome Robert Forster as a dogged detective; **Bride of Finklestein**, a Yiddishized variation on creaky mad scientist tropes that boasts one of the film's best gags, a castle doorbell that plays the "Wilhelm," an endlessly recycled scream favored by Hollywood soundmen; and the elaborate **Schmo Boat**, a musical comedy short lensed in Tru-Color, with songs, dances, an appearance by Daniel Roebuck as a relentless heckler, and an uncredited cameo by auteur Schlesinger as a Jewish-accented Jerome Kern delivering an oy-inducing rendition of "Old Man River." **Imitation of Wife** (a flagrant rip-off of a contemporaneous Laurel & Hardy classic for which, we're informed, B&W producer Weinberg was forced to apologize) and **It's a Frame-Up!** complete the collected shorts. Extras include commentary by Schlesinger, Santa Maria and Ryan, a mock 1928 Vitaphone short entitled **First Things Last**, a Spanish-language outtake from **Imitation of Wife**, an amusing 1962 interview with the team talking about their supposed (later excised) bit as escaped prisoners in Stanley Kramer's comedian-crowded **It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World**, extended musical

numbers, deleted scenes, behind-the-scenes footage, and nearly an hour of bloopers and outtakes. If you give it half a chance, Schlesinger's elaborate post-modern romp just may make a Biffle and Shooster booster out of you.

—*The Phantom*

## SCHLOCK (1971) 888

D: John Landis. Eliza Garrett, Saul Kahan, Charles Villers, Joseph Piantadosi, John Chambers, Eric Allison, Schlockthropus (as himself). 80 mins. (Turbine Medien GmbH) 6/18

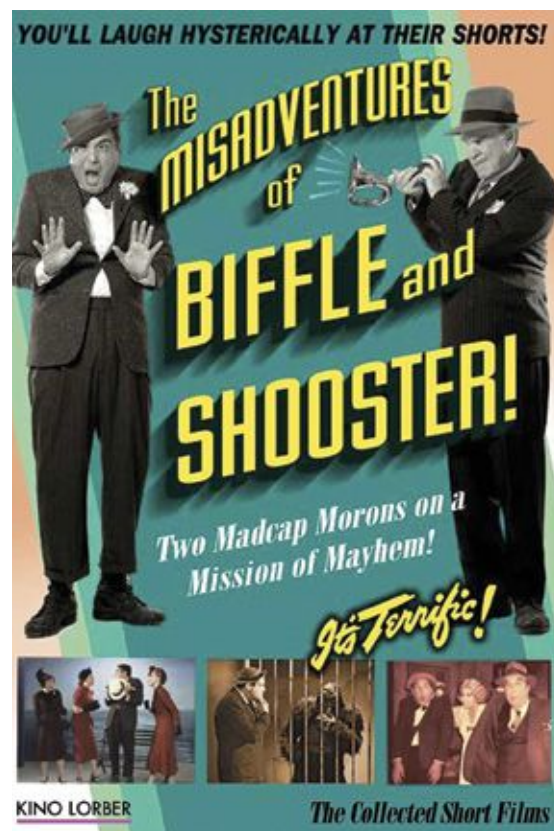
This is one of those flicks that—despite its lack of budget and rough-around-the-edges amateur-night look—you have a great time watching because its heart is in the right place. 21-year-old Landis made this monster movie spoof in less than two weeks, but his "film-geek" enthusiasm shines through. The Schlockthropus (a missing link of sorts) comes up out of the ground and wanders around L.A., leaving behind a trail of dead bodies and banana peels. While the humor is all over the board, there are more hits than misses. Two hilarious scenes find Schlocky wandering into a neighborhood bijou for a fright flick and the Neanderthal playing a game of fetch with a beautiful blind girl. (Watch for Forry Ackerman in the bijou sequence.) Rick Baker provided the monster suit and assorted body parts. Initially released by legendary producer Jack H. Harris, who performed the same service for John Carpenter's film debut **Dark Star**, Schlock would make a terrific double bill with Joe Dante's first feature **Hollywood Boulevard**. Schlock was earlier out on VHS as **The Banana Monster** (Continental, n.i.d.) and DVD (Anchor Bay Entertainment). Turbine's new German import (with English and German language options) arrives with a John Landis intro, a **Trailers from Hell** segment, **Birth of a Schlock** (a 41-minute Landis interview), an interview with cameraman Bob Collins, an audio commentary with Landis and Baker, a second track with the comedy team Strayer, Bender & Streberg, trailers and more.

—Rob Freese

## ZOMCOM BOOK BONUS

**MY UNCLE JOHN IS A ZOMBIE** By John A. Russo. Burning Bulb Publishing. Trade Paperback. 192 pages. \$19.68 (get it?)

**My Uncle John Is a Zombie** is a screenplay novelization of the horror comedy movie which is, as of this writing, unspooling at festivals and conventions. Russo's legacy as one of the original creators of today's zombiemanía provides the authoritative weight as to why Uncle John entrusts him as his "coming out" writer. Coming out in the sense that unbeknownst to us all, there are *real* zombies amongst us! Uncle John has



been secretly cared for by his niece Cy-Fi and nephew Oscar in a small Pittsburgh suburb. He's a likeable character and even though his relatives are half a bubble off plumb, they're steadfast in their love for him. Cy-Fi decides that since this is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of **Night of the Living Dead**, it's time to unveil Uncle John and show that functioning zombies are compassionate, intelligent and can even pop an erection. Uncle John soon becomes a global celebrity and conducts podcasts, but darker forces are at work as others see his acceptance as a menace, not to mention an opportunity to enrich themselves. Russo is expert at pacing his novels and keeping and building his parallel storylines in narrative sync, then giving them maximum impact at their eventual collision. The book also acts as a political soapbox for the author. The family's hoped-for understanding of a zombie's care is both metaphorically and directly compared to a sanctuary city's empathetic protection of illegal aliens. And while never mentioning the President by name, Uncle John will periodically discuss his disdain for the "Tweeter in Chief." He proffers his dislike for recent real-life law and policy changes, executive orders and "Faux (Fox) News" amid what is otherwise a fictional tale. It's an unusual departure from Russo's typical storytelling style. Still, this is a tome that's worthy of bookshelf space. And yes, he's got some serious flesh-ripping scenes in here, too! I've spent most of my life admiring John Russo's unrelenting ability to craft entertaining stories and create the characters to tell them. I'm still waiting to be disappointed. 8

—Tim Ferrante



## DIGITAL DEBUTS

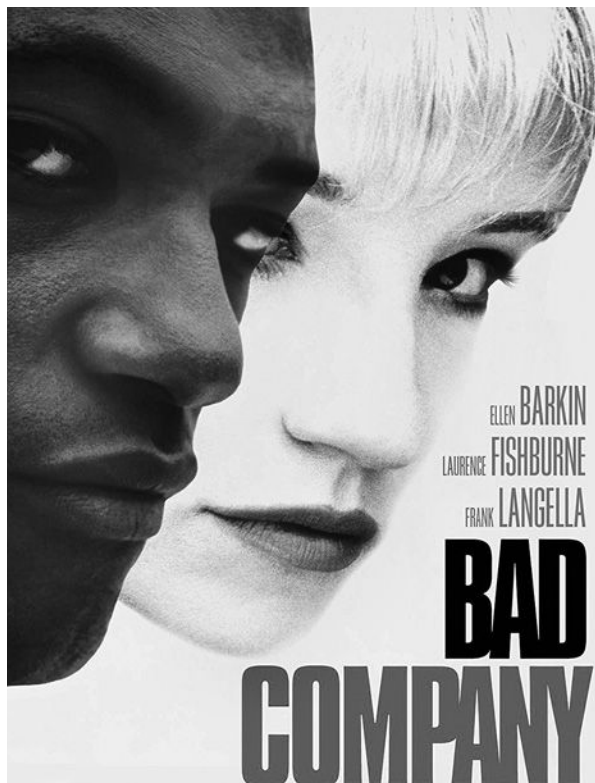
### ALPHA VIDEO

(\$5.98 DVD)

#### DARK MOUNTAIN (1944) B&W 88/1/2

D: William Berke. Robert Lowery, Ellen Drew, Regis Toomey, Eddie Quillan, Elisha Cook, Jr., Ralph Dunn. 56 mins.

Normally mild-mannered supporting thesp Toomey supplies the noir elements as smoothly brutal racketeer Steve Downey in an otherwise slender and sloppy B thriller, the first from the indie unit Pine-Thomas for Paramount Pictures. Toomey shines as a smiling sociopath who can charm the figurative pants off unlikely new bride Kay's (Drew) hick family during a nightclub meet and greet, then excuse himself to drop a fatal crate on a snooping cop and plug a pair of untrustworthy confederates in the course of a single busy night. Refusing to play Steve's twisted game, Kay seeks shelter at the titular locale, a national park supervised by rather sappy forest ranger Don Bradley (Lowery), the upright fellow she'd earlier rejected in favor of her fugitive hubby. When Steve barges in on Kay's cabin hideout, Toomey goes into a reasonably convincing unshaven Bogie act, pacing, chain-smoking and barking out idle threats. Unfortunately, **Dark Mountain** is otherwise done in by rushed plotting, thin characterizations and, most damning of all, corny would-be comic relief supplied by Don's dopey underling Willie (Quillan) and his trick-happy dog. Still worth catching for Toomey's tough turn.



### ARROW VIDEO

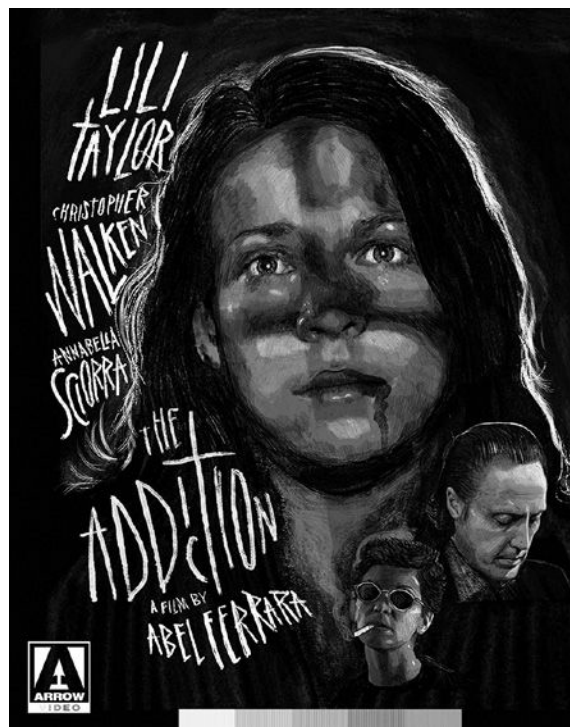
(\$39.95 Blu-ray) 6/18

#### THE ADDICTION (1995) B&W 88

D: Abel Ferrara. Lili Taylor, Christopher Walken, Edie Falco, Annabella Sciorra, Paul Calderon, Fredro Starr, Kathryn Erbe. 82 mins.

Set in and around Greenwich Village's New York University, **The Addiction** stars a game but baffling Taylor as Kathleen Conklin, an embittered grad student prone to waxing obvious via frequent apoplectic, apocalyptic rants re the world's sundry injustices. One night Kathleen is brutally beaten and bitten by equally attitudinal street vampire Casanova (Sciorra). Soon after, our sour antiheroine is talking her stuffy professor (Calderon) into shooting heroin, then nips his neck, along with fellow students Jean (future **The Sopranos** star Falco) and an anthropology major (Erbe) as well as strangers of all stripes. In the vampire vision of erstwhile NYC mean-streets specialist Ferrara (see also his brilliant **Bad Lieutenant** and **Ms. 45**) and scripter Nicholas St. John, the bites don't prove fatal but transform their recipients into surly bloodsuckers. Walken has a showy role as Peina, a veteran vampire who volunteers a few inside tips to Kathleen while, like nearly everyone else in this mouthy movie, spouting Philosophy 101-type tidbits. Characters and motivations seem murky and arbitrary throughout this rage-choked exercise, but you have to credit the ever-offbeat Ferrara and St.

John with at least having the courage of their conniptions. Taylor, meanwhile, went on to engage in another antisocial downtown-'tude rampage as hostile lesbian writer, anarchist and would-be assassin Valerie Solanis in Mary (American Psycho) Harron's fact-based **I Shot Andy Warhol** (MGM). Oddly, **The Addiction** followed hot on the fangs of yet another black-and-white Fun City vampire chiller, Michael Almereyda's **Nadja** (VS #18), featuring Peter Fonda as Van Helsing. Arrow Video opens its vaults and veins for a plethora of **Addiction** extras, including a fresh Ferrara commentary shared with biographer Brad Stevens, the new documentary **Talking with the Vampires**, with Ferrara, Taylor and other participants, additional cast and crew interviews, the archival doc **Abel Ferrara Edits The Addiction**, and more.



### KINO LORBER FILMS

(\$24.95) 4/18

#### BAD COMPANY (1995) 88

D: Damian Harris. Ellen Barkin, Laurence Fishburne, Frank Langella, Michael Beach, Gia Carides, David Ogden Stiers. 108 mins.

At first glance, **Bad Company** would appear to be just another standard-issue mainstream suspense, but director Harris and writer Ross Thomas harbor a deeper agenda, one executed with admirable precision. While their basic plot may be fairly routine, they employ it to draw us into an ultra-cool, emotionally detached moral wasteland populated by characters who, while spanning an inclusive gender, age and ethnic spectrum, are uniformly lacking an essential human dimension—the ability to experience the slightest flicker of empathy—that serves as both professional virtue and fatal flaw. Ex-CIA agent Nelson Crowe (Fishburne) joins a team of smoothly ruthless corporate enforcers run by fellow former government op Vic Grimes (Langella), who's in turn assisted by equally viperous Margaret Wells (Barkin, one of the screen's most memorable distaff sociopaths). It's Crowe's apparent mission to bribe a debt-riddled judge (Stiers) into voting in favor of corrupt industrialist plaintiff Walter Curl (Spalding Gray, in a quirky, petulant perf), whose pollutants have killed or deformed dozens of innocent kids. As various plots and counterplots unfold, it becomes clear there's no one to root for here (not, at least, until very late in the game). The thesp's tightly controlled turns—Fishburne and Barkin continue to breathlessly conspire even during sex (!)—make **Bad Company** a viewing experience as compelling as it is chilling. Extras on Kino's Blu-ray include an audio commentary by director Harris.

—The Phantom

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## JEREMIAH'S WOODS

**THE SHED IS RED.**



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**pink donuts.**  
**red soda.**  
**a yellow glove.**  
**a man just wants to bury his dog,**  
**but the woods belong to someone else...**

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# OLIVE FILMS

(\$24.95 Blu-ray) 1/18

## THE RED SQUIRREL (1993) ♂♂1/2

D: Julio Medem. Emma Suárez, Nancho Novo, María Barranco, Karra Elejalde, Carmelo Gómez, Cristina Marcos. 114 mins.

Devastated after a breakup, one-hit-wonder musician Novo is about to jump off a bridge when Suárez careens off it on her motorcycle. Novo runs to her aid and, while waiting for the ambulance, discovers that she is suffering from total amnesia. Acting on impulse, he tells her that he is her boyfriend. He maintains that charade over the days that follow, and the two head off for a camping vacation ostensibly for her to get to know him again and remember a relationship only he knows never existed. At the campground (the Red Squirrel of the title), they strike up the acquaintance of a family that has plenty of weirdness going on too, what with the children pretending to be husband and wife. Meanwhile, Suárez's actual boyfriend (Gómez) is looking for her, putting out calls on the media, which stretches Novo's abilities to keep the illusion going. And who is Suárez really? Is she as amnesiac as she seems? There are traces here of *Vertigo*, especially with the way Novo seeks to blur the difference between Suárez and the woman who left him. And there are aspects suggesting a creepier, gender-flipped *While You Were Sleeping*. Plus everything is bathed in a Lynchian atmosphere. But though the film maintains the viewer's interest, it is difficult to feel truly engaged with any of the

characters. It feels as if everyone is weird for the sake of being weird, with very little depth beyond that. And while our POV character is a total creep, the movie seems to want us to sympathize with him by the end. An odd film, then, with points of interest, and some striking moments, but a hard one to fully embrace.

—David Annandale

# SHOUT! FACTORY

(\$29.99 Blu-ray) 6/18

## THE CURSE OF THE CAT PEOPLE

(1944) B&W ♂♂♂1/2

D: Robert Wise, Gunther von Fritsch. Simone Simon, Kent Smith, Jane Randolph, Ann Carter, Eve March, Elizabeth Russell, Sir Lancelot. 70 mins.

Seven years after *Cat People's* conclusion and the apparent demise of feline-centric emigre Irena, NYC architects Oliver Reed and Ann (Smith and Randolph, reprising their original roles) have married and moved to Tarrytown, but all is not well in the Reed household. Daughter Amy (Carter) frequently retreats into a fantasy world, where she encounters her spiritual mother, Irena (Simon). The title, as fright fans know, is a downright cheat—*Curse* isn't really a horror film at all—but this is still an extremely unnerving, often moving and poetic pic contrasting Amy's melancholy hallucinations with the over-insistent clarity and relentless reality of her suburban surroundings. Another neat job by Lewton, scripter DeWitt Bodeen and the ace RKO crew, who create a mood that's a world away from the more overtly chilling original. Extras on Shout! Factory's fresh Blu-ray include an archival audio commentary by genre-film historian Greg Mank, with audio interview excerpts with the late, great Simon that originally appeared on Warner's *Val Lewton Horror Collection* DVD, a new track with author Steve Haberman, an audio interview with Ann Carter conducted by Tom Weaver, video essay, *Lewton's Muse: The Dark Eyes of Simone Simon*, by filmmaker Constantine Nasr, plus theatrical trailers and still gallery.

# WARNER ARCHIVE

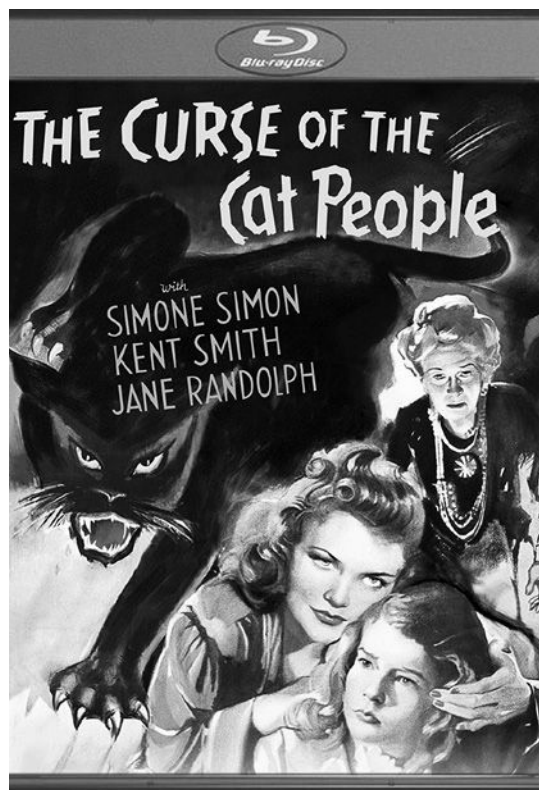
## THE BLACK SCORPION (1957)

B&W

♂♂♂

D: Edward Ludwig. Richard Denning, Mara Corday, Carlos Rivas, Mario Navarro. 88 mins. (\$21.99 Blu-ray) 3/18

Following a rather slow start, insect-fear fans are treated to a giant-scorpion invasion of Mexico, with eerie effects chores handled by Willis O'Brien. Though B-movie mainstay Denning makes for a rather bland hero, Corday, as wealthy

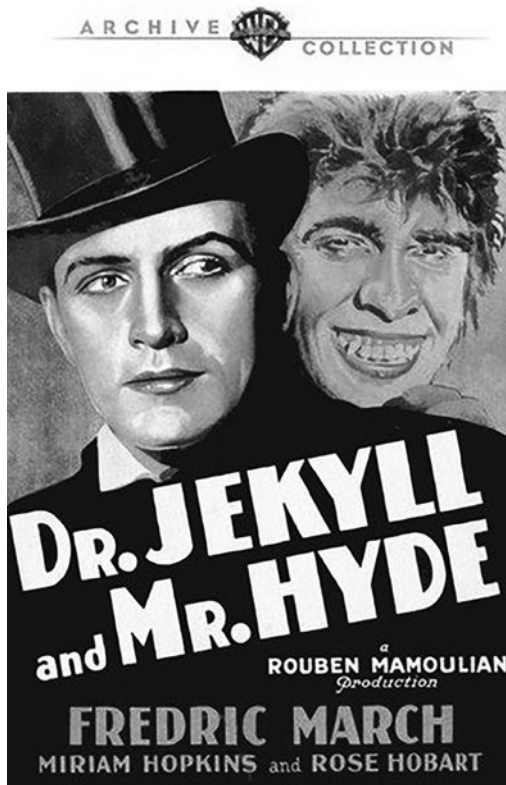


land baroness Teresa Alvarez, is on hand to add some visual spice, and several of the Mexican supporting characters lend welcome eccentricity, like the government official who blithely advises his colleagues during the escalating scorpion emergency, "I beg of you not to lose your heads—in any sense of the word." FX highlights include a terrific outsized scorpion assault on two hapless phone linemen, where live actors and models are seamlessly interwoven, a worm vs. scorpion battle, and the critter's attack on Mexico City.

## DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE (1932) B&W ♂♂♂♂

D: Rouben Mamoulian. Fredric March, Miriam Hopkins, Rose Hobart, Halliwell Hobbes. 96 mins. (\$17.99 DVD) 3/18

Mamoulian's thematically complex, cinematically adventurous and generally intense 1932 adaptation of the oft-filmed Robert Louis Stevenson novella remains the best. March, who earned an Oscar for his schizoid work here, is excellent as the progressive, life-embracing Dr. Jekyll, whose efforts to break the stifling bonds of Victorian constraint eventually transform him into the simian sadist Mr. Hyde; outsized dentures force him to talk like Humphrey Bogart while his unharnessed id prompts antisocial behavior worthy of Al Pacino's Tony (*Scarface*) Montana. Actress Hopkins projects sensuous vulnerability as Ivy, the hooker with a heart of champagne, who's aided by Dr. Jekyll and viciously abused by his badder half Hyde. Mamoulian's highly active camera brings the escalating dramatic action into sharp, compelling focus throughout this horror classic. ♂







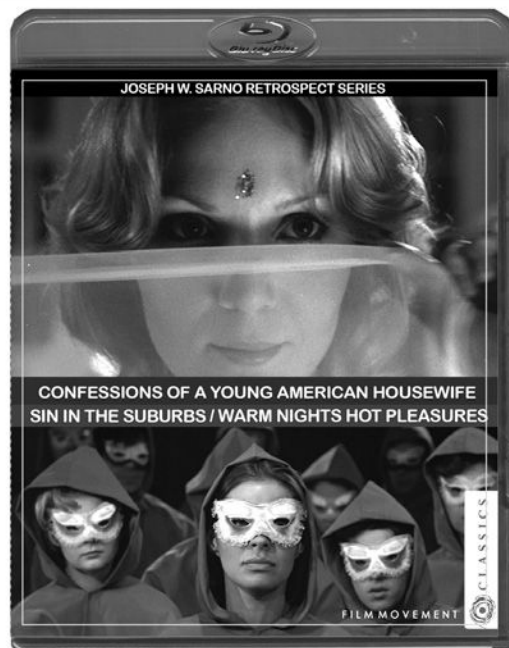
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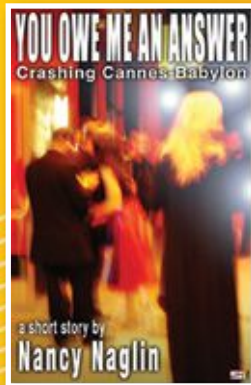
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Author, film critic and freelance writer Nancy Naglin has been the Art-House columnist for *The Phantom of the Movies' VideoScope* since 1993. Her work has appeared in numerous publications, including *The New York Daily News*, *New York Magazine*, *The Village Voice* and *Crawdaddy*.

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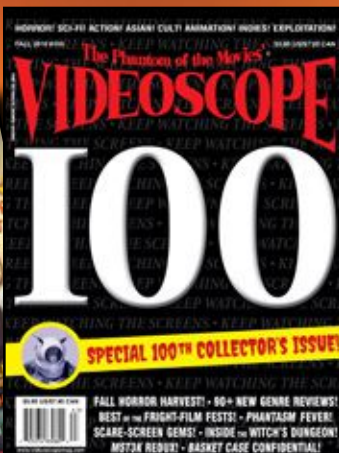
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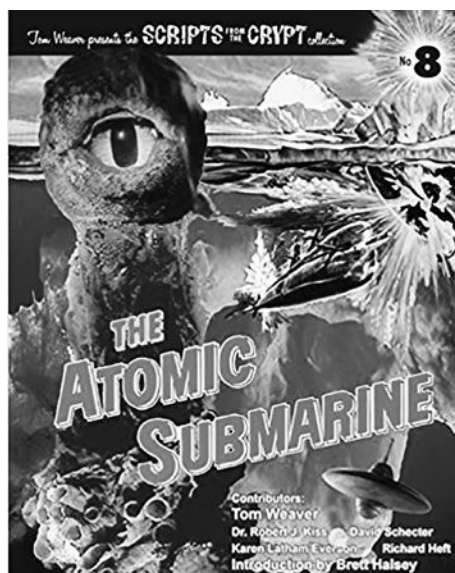
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## PHANTOM BOOKSHELF

**ATOMIC SUBMARINE: Scripts from the Crypt Collection No. 8** By Tom Weaver. BearManor Media. Softcover. Photo Illustrated. 226 pages. \$24.95

The latest flick to register a major blip on the **Scripts from the Crypt** team's radar may not have caused many waves during its initial release but proves a fascinating topic for study. Genre producer and genuine movie buff Alex Gordon recruited a cast of familiar film faces, from former "Falcon" Tom Conway to erstwhile B-western hero Bob Steele, to staff the title tub, a subaqueous craft that runs afoul of a pushy underwater alien resembling a Cyclopean sock puppet. **Atomic Submarine** (1959) holds nostalgia value galore as the **SFTC**ers spare no effort in covering every celluloid angle of this modest but fun affair. Captain Tom Weaver handles the production history as well as contributing script notes, Fun Facts and "in-depth" (their pun) archival interviews with filmmaker Gordon. The invaluable Dr. Robert J. Kiss again contributes a detailed account of the film's release history, citing where it played and with what, while soundtrack scholar David Schecter discusses the score, Karen Latham Everson pens a Gordon profile, and other experts chime in with key observations.



And, of course, there's the complete original script, along with pressbook and images galore. As in previous series entries, the movie under the microscope is just a starting point that leads to a treasure trove of arcane info.

For fans of our current cover boy, the late, great Christopher Lee, we recommend Paul Leggett's thought-provoking tome **Good Versus Evil in the Films of Christopher Lee** (McFarland & Co.), a thorough exploration of the title theme in Lee roles ranging from his cult leader in **The Wicker Man** to his demon-fighter in **The Devil Rides Out**, among many more. ⚡

## End Credits Contributing Writers

- ⚡David Annandale's latest **Warhammer 40,000** novel is **Castellan**, available at [www.blacklibrary.com](http://www.blacklibrary.com).
- ⚡Dan Cziraky is slowly recovering from the tragic news that NASA didn't find Ice Warriors on Mars.
- ⚡The dynamic dad-daughter duo of **Terry & Tiffany DuFoe** operate the award-winning Internet radio station **Cult Radio A-Go-Go!**
- ⚡Ronald Charles Epstein's book reviews are quoted on Amazon.ca.
- ⚡Tim Ferrante plans to vacation in his nearest drive-in booth.
- ⚡Robert Freese and Paul McVay's genre zine **Drive-In of The Damned** welcomes its second issue into the world.
- ⚡Chris Hallock is a freelance genre journalist.
- ⚡Scope out Joe Kane's new tome **Found Footage: How the Astro-Zombies Saved My Life and Other Tales of Movie Madness** (Cultmachine), available from [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).
- ⚡Nancy Naglin's latest book, **The Salvation Army Tales**, is available from [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).
- ⚡Joseph Perry covers the international film festival front.
- ⚡John Seal received a clean bill of health from Dr. Mabuse.
- ⚡Don Vaughan is the author of **Reel Tears: The Beverly Washburn Story** (BearManor).
- ⚡Scott Voisin's **Character Kings 2** is available from BearManor Media.

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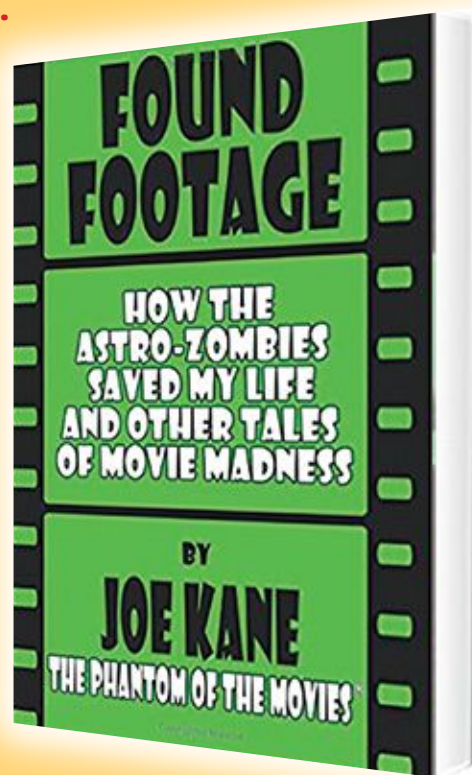
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## PHANTOM PHLASHES!

**HORROR HORIZON:** Universal Studios unleashes a pair of big-screen scare offerings, leading with **Pacific Rim: Uprising**, Steven S. DeKnight's sequel to Guillermo del Toro's *keiju* spectacular, starring John Boyega and Scott (Son of Clint) Eastwood, and following with Steven Soderbergh's cinematic return **Unsane**, with Clare Foy and Joshua Leonard. Shout! Factory hosts a trio of fresh terror titles—the zombie horror **The Cured**, plus **Midnighters** and **Pyewacket**—while Paramount presents the surprise hit, the silence-driven **A Quiet Place**, featuring Emily Blunt. Elsewhere, Well Go USA introduces the surreal fest-circuit fave **The Endless**, Image Entertainment looses the lycanthropic follow-up **Another Wolfcop**, and Magnolia Entertainment contributes the supernatural chiller **Marrowbone** and **Dead Shack**.

**KILLER THRILLERS:** In the thriller arena, erstwhile comic Jim Carrey enjoys a radical change of pace as the tortured protagonist in **Dark Crimes** (Lionsgate), Shout! Factory imports the Chinese art-house thriller **The Housemaid**, lesbian punk rockers encounter a serial killer in the Brit entry **Spidarlings** (Troma), and Joaquin Phoenix headlines in the sex trafficking expose **You Were Never Really Here** (Lionsgate). Lionsgate likewise hatches Steven C. Miller's action sequel **Escape Plan 2: Hades**, with Sylvester Stallone and Dave Bautista, while Well Go USA launches Dante Lam's elaborate anti-terrorist thriller **Operation Red Sea**. Look also for Ryan Prows' wild crime caper **Lowlife** (Shout! Factory) and **Pendulum** (Sony Pictures).

**SCI-FI FORECAST:** Steven Spielberg goes digital with his elaborate game-playing futuristic fable **Ready Player One** (Warner Home Entertainment), starring Tye Sheridan, Olivia Cooke, Mark Rylance and Simon Pegg. Logan Marshall-Green portrays a mugging victim who turns into a virtual superman as the result of a high-tech **Upgrade** (Universal Studios), the latest genre effort from busy actor/director Leigh (Saw) Whannell. Two new post-apoc pictures likewise surface: **Don't Grow Up** (Magnolia) arrives as something of a modern **Lord of the Flies** variation as a band of abandoned teens struggles to survive in a future wasteland populated by psychotic adults, while James Franco goes the ersatz **Mad Max** route in Lionsgate's **Future World**. On the vintage television front, Kino Lorber Films brings the long-anticipated Ray Bradbury-based miniseries **The Martian Chronicles** to Blu-ray and DVD players. ☿

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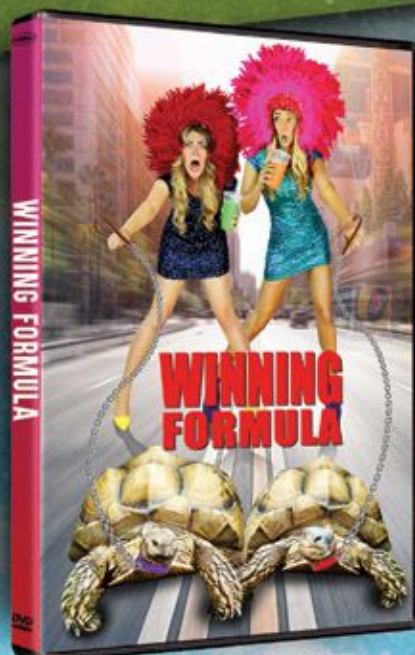
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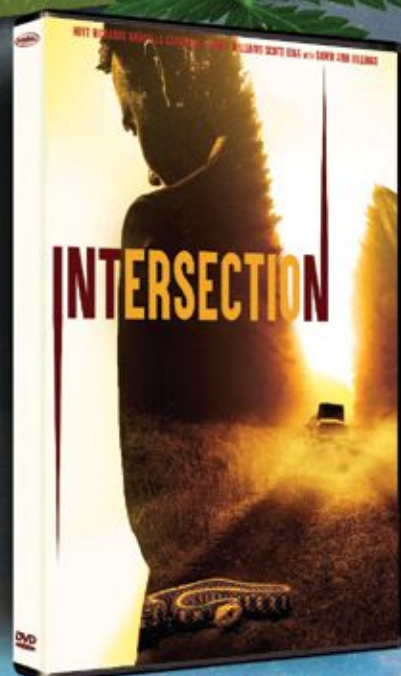
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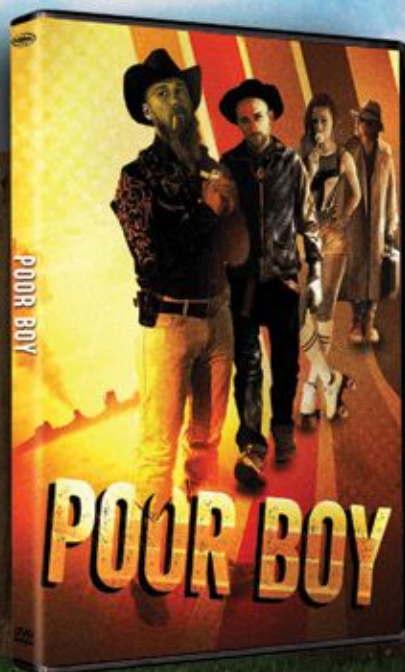
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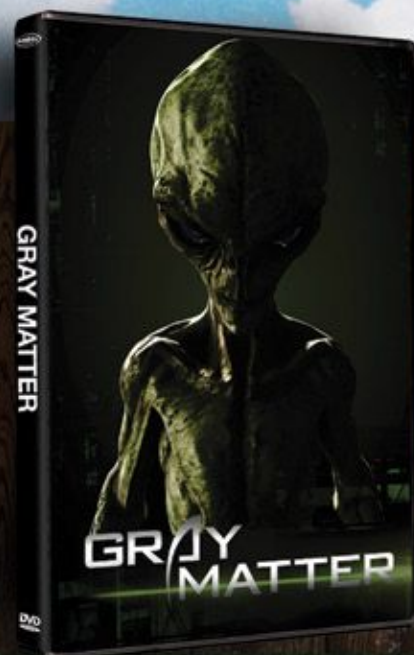
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